

**J. H. GRAHAM**

**MISSISSIPPI  
CIRCUIT  
RIDERS  
1865 - 1965**

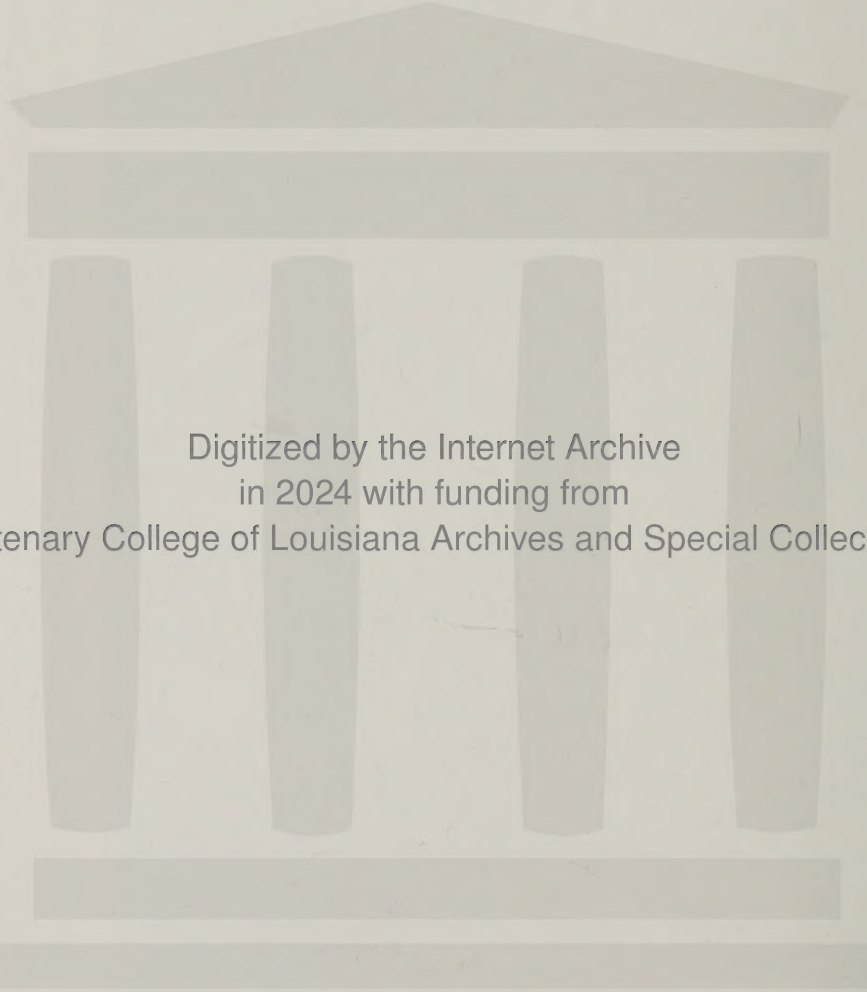




Names of the Ministers in the Mississippi Mission Conference — December 25, 1865

*Standing, from left to right:* William Murrell, J. M. Bryant, Emperor Williams, S. M. Small, Henry Green, J. Goodwyn, Hardy Ryan, A. Ross, Scott Chinn, David Ennis, Samuel Osborne and Thomas Kennedy.

*Seated, from left to right:* H. G. Jackson, R. H. Diossy, J. P. Newman, Bishop Thomson, N. L. Brakeman and William Henry.



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MISSISSIPPI  
CIRCUIT RIDERS  
1865-1965

By JOHN H. GRAHAM

*Director of  
The Board of Missions  
of  
The Methodist Church  
New York, New York  
1967*

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MISSISSIPPI CIRCUIT RIDERS 1865-1965

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by

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JOHN H. GRAHAM  
The Board of Missions  
of  
The Methodist Church  
New York, New York  
1967

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TO MY CHURCH HISTORY PROFESSOR  
THE LATE BISHOP ROBERT N. BROOKS  
UNDER WHOSE GUIDANCE  
I DEVELOPED AN APPRECIATION  
FOR THE STUDY OF  
CHURCH HISTORY



## PREFACE

This volume intends to portray the historical development of Methodism among men of color in North Mississippi since 1865. It traces the movement from the Mississippi Mission Conference until the Diamond Anniversary of the Upper Mississippi Conference in 1965. In brief, it highlights the work of The Methodist Church among Negroes in Mississippi for the last century.

Its aim is less ambitious than the history of Mississippi Methodism by Jones published in 1887. Its accents will also be different. Although it will relate the work of the Mississippi Circuit Riders, due consideration will be given to the labors of the early missionaries. The contributions of the Board of Missions and the Freedman's Aid Society will be stressed. The effect of the social milieu and political climate upon the work of the Circuit Riders will also be indicated.

Outstanding Circuit Riders will be enumerated. Less towering but no less significant Circuit Riders will be indexed as well. They too have made a contribution. They have done the ordinary work in an extra-ordinary way. They are the unsung heroes in Mississippi Methodism. They have not made the headlines of the church periodicals, but they have darted the Mississippi hills and the rolling Delta lands with Methodist churches.

In his study, *The Lively Experiment*, Sidney Mead enumerates three types of participants in the experiment of American Democracy. These participants are classified as eager-beavers, reluctant pioneers and settlers. Likewise, among the Mississippi Circuit Riders are found examples. The eager-beavers were the early pioneer preachers. They were the "doers of the word." They were itinerant in the

true Methodist fashion. In contrast, there were the reluctant pioneers. They lacked the ability to keep going. They "could not take it." They gave up when the going got hard. Like John Mark, they turned back. Reluctant pioneers may be illustrated by the number of men who terminated their conference membership by withdrawal, expulsion, voluntary or involuntary location. From 1865 through 1965, there were 139 reluctant pioneers in Mississippi Methodism. They made history too. They must be recorded among the "quitters."

The settlers have perpetuated the work of the early pioneer preachers. They have built upon the foundation laid so nobly by the eager-beavers. They have continued to organize congregations, to erect church buildings, to provide Christian nurture and pastoral care to the new converts. Among the settlers must be recorded the name of Donaldson Green. He remained on the Wier Charge for 21 years.

The title, "The Mississippi Circuit Riders" is used to portray the itineracy in Mississippi. Perhaps the itineracy is the most striking of the Wesleyan institutions. The horse has become the symbol of this institution. The horse represents the old Saxon standard for riding a circuit. These early preachers kept on the move. The message of their Christ was urgent and demanded haste. Nothing was allowed to impede its delivery. The words of Herodotus, in speaking of the Couriers of the Persian King, describe the Mississippi Circuit Riders:

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It would be an almost impossible task to trace in details the provenience of every fact recorded in this study. Many persons have contributed directly or indirectly to its production. To all, I acknowledge my indebtedness still not fully discharged. I wish herewith to express my sincere appreciation to the late Reverend Claud T. Allen (deceased on June 28, 1966) for procuring the early Conference Journals for me. Credit is due Mrs. Nora Balls of Louisville, Mississippi for preserving these journals for Methodist posterity. Special mention must be made of Dr. L. Scott Allen, editor of The Central Christian Advocate, for providing data from his files. Indeed, I am grateful to my family—India, James and Patricia—for their assistance in this endeavor. Patricia suggested the title of the volume. James and India worked assiduously in assisting me with data collection. I must mention also the laboring efforts of Mrs. Sallye Williams. She assisted in revising the manuscript. Sincere thanks must go to Miss Lillian Nelson and Miss Marva Smith for typing the manuscript. Above all, I am in debt beyond my ability to pay, to the Mississippi Circuit Riders. They were the “makers of history” which we were privileged to record. The labors of the early missionaries must not go unrecorded. They too played a significant role in the genesis of Mississippi Methodism.

J. H. G.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Negro has played a minor yet significant role in the drama of American Methodism. Prior to the organization of The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, the men of color were already adding technicolor to the complexion of Methodist societies.

On November 28, 1758, John Wesley baptized his first Negro converts. In his Journal, he records: "I rode to Wandsworth and baptized two Negroes belonging to Mr. Gilbert, a gentleman lately from Antigua." Wandsworth was a metropolitan borough of London. Hyde described it as a "desolate place." However, it will be remembered in Methodist history as the place where the first Africans were converted to the Methodist faith. Wesley recorded further: "One of these was deeply convinced of sin; the other is the first African Christian I have known; but shall not God in His own time have these heathens for His own inheritance?"<sup>1</sup>

When these converts returned to Antigua, they became flaming evangelists of the new truths. Their master, Nathaniel Gilbert, was influenced by them as well. Although he was a lawyer, planter and the Speaker of the House in the Island, he became a local preacher in The Methodist Church. These African Christians and their master, Mr. Gilbert, introduced Methodism in the West Indies. Mr. Gilbert's home became the first chapel. Betts avers: "The first Methodist local society or church in the Western Hemisphere was set up in Antigua, composed almost wholly of Negroes."<sup>2</sup>

New York Methodism included Negroes also from the beginning. It was through the persuasive power of Barbara Heck that Phillip Embury, a local preacher from Ireland, established a church in his house. Among the first worship-

pers was Beatty, a Negro servant of the Heck family. She became a charter member of the John Street Church. This church dates back to 1766. Two years later, Peter Williams was converted and received into the society. He was described as "of pure African descent." He was a member of a large family—seven sisters and two brothers. Only Peter united with the Methodist society. Peter always gave credit to Captain Webb for his conversion experience. He was converted at a service conducted on the rigging loft by Captain Webb.

Peter was the property of James Aymor.<sup>3</sup> His master engaged in the tobacco industry. He was a loyalist. After the Revolutionary War, Mr. Aymor felt obliged to return to his native land. Before he left New York, he sold Peter to the John Street Church for 40 pounds.<sup>4</sup> On June 10, 1783, Peter became the property of the John Street Church. Soon after, he began to negotiate with the trustees for his emancipation. He made his first installment with his watch. It was valued at five pounds. The remaining notes were paid through his services to the church as its custodian. On November 4, 1785, he satisfied the mortgage. He became a freedman. He died in 1823.

Mary Durham was another Negro member of the John Street Society. She was a native of St. Christopher in the West Indies.<sup>5</sup> Molly served as the caretaker of the parsonage. Later, Mary Durham was united in holy wedlock with Peter Williams. She became Mrs. Mary Williams. She died in 1821.

Negroes were not only members of the early New York Society but also they were contributors to the church budget. When the first church was erected, Negroes were listed among the subscribers. Hyde records: "Two hundred and fifty names of subscribers are still preserved, among which African maids—Dinahs and Chloes—are in honor with

Livingstones and Delancys, the 'blue blood' of the time." <sup>6</sup> Mention is made also of Rachel who gave nine shillings and Margaret, seven shillings. <sup>7</sup> They were caretakers of the parsonage also.

The Society founded by Robert Strawbridge on Sam's Creek, Frederick County, Maryland, had Negro members as well. There was a slave belonging to the Schweitzer family included among the early members. <sup>8</sup> Her name was Anne—sometimes called "Aunt Schweitzer."

In fact, Negroes responded favorably everywhere to the message proclaimed by the early Methodist itinerants. In 1770, Joseph Pillmoor wrote to John Wesley: "We have a number of black women who meet together every week, many of whom are happy in the Love of God." <sup>9</sup>

Very early in Methodist history, Negroes responded to the Call to preach. The earliest of the Negro local preachers was Harry Hosier. He was called "Black Harry." Asbury first alluded to Black Harry in 1780 as a "suitable traveling companion to preach to the colored people." He was called by Dr. Rush as "the greatest orator in America." On occasion, Asbury permitted Black Harry to travel with Thomas Coke. He also travelled with Freeborn Garrettson.

On September 11, 1786, Black Harry preached his first sermon in John Street Church. The following comment was made:

Lately, came to this city, a very singular black man who is said to be quite ignorant of letters, yet he has preached in The Methodist Church several times to the acceptance of several well-disposed judicious people. He delivers his discourses with great zeal and pathos and his language and communication is by no means contemptible. It is the wish of several of our correspondents that this same black man may be so far successful as to rouse the dormant zeal of members of our slothful white people, who seem very little affected about the concerns of another world. <sup>10</sup>

Black Harry was acceptable to the different denominations. They heard him with admiration. The Quakers thought as he was unlearned that he must preach by immediate inspiration.<sup>11</sup> Stevens reported that, "Harry preached continually with great success among both whites and blacks."

One Negro pioneer preacher possessed not only the gift of preaching but also had the genius of organization. He was an organizer of churches. Special mention must be made of Henry Evans. He was a freeborn Negro from Virginia.<sup>12</sup> By trade he was a cobbler. After his conversion he continued to work at his trade but also became a local preacher. He organized The Fourth Street Church at Wilmington, Delaware. He travelled along the Atlantic seacoast en route to Charleston, South Carolina. On his way, he preached. He stopped at Fayetteville, North Carolina. He was permitted to preach in a church there. His preaching was so powerful that soon he became an incipient threat to the status quo. As was said of Paul and Silas in Acts 17:6: "These men who have made trouble all over the world have now come here and Jason has harboured them," could be appropriately applied to Henry. He was the Nineteenth Century trouble maker at Fayetteville, North Carolina. The town council—the nerve center of Fayetteville—became very disturbed. Evans was upsetting everything—lethargic complacency, social and economic status quo and smug self-satisfaction. In addition, he was winning converts to his faith. This town council issued a mandate which forbade Evans to continue to preach in the town. He was forced to the outskirts but the people followed him. Soon the people brought pressure on the town council to rescind its action. He was permitted to return to the town and preach.

He stayed long enough to build a church. It was named Evans Chapel in honor of its founder. The white people and Negroes joined the church. Stevens records that the Ne-

groes were crowded out of the church by the whites. Sheds were added to the church on each side. The Negroes occupied the sheds and the whites occupied the original building. Stevens records further: "Henry Evans was confessedly the father of The Methodist Church, white and black, in Fayetteville." <sup>13</sup>

In 1810, Evans persuaded the leaders of the South Carolina Conference to take the church into its conference. It became a church in the South Carolina Conference on the Camden District in 1810. The church had 110 white members and 87 Negroes in that year. The bishop appointed P. Sturdevant as pastor. In 1815, it was placed in the Pee Wee District. It continued to grow in membership. By 1817, the Evans Chapel had a membership of 520. It was an interracial church. There were 153 white and 367 Negro members at that time.<sup>14</sup>

When Joseph Travis retired from the Pee Wee District, he was appointed to the Evans Chapel. In his autobiography, Travis paid this tribute to Evans: "He began more and more to elicit the attention of the white population. Ultimately, a white married lady of good mind and accomplished manners—a celebrated school mistress in the town joined The Methodist Episcopal Church . . . prejudice . . . began to melt like wax before the flame. Other white citizens presented themselves for admission . . . His congregation became larger and respectable . . . he . . . transferred church, congregation and all, over to the white preachers." <sup>15</sup>

Evans died in 1810. His last conscious act was to quote I Corinthians 15:57:

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was buried under the chancel of the church that he had built in Fayetteville.

The men of color have played no mean role in the missionary movement of the church. Their participation in the missionary movement has evidenced the reflex effect of missions. The Negro has not only been a product of the missionary movement, but he has also contributed *to* the missionary movement.

The first home missionary was John Stewart. He was a freeborn Negro in Powhatan County, Virginia.<sup>16</sup> When he reached manhood, he developed the wanderlust. He started to Ohio. En route, he was robbed of his possessions. The loss of his possessions, along with being in a strange land, led Stewart to muse upon the condition of his soul.

He lived with a tavern keeper. This was conducive to the development of drug addiction. This he did. Still he possessed a conscience. He made frequent promises that he would not drink any longer. Further, he promised that he would forsake all and seek the Lord. He could not keep his promise. He was easily persuaded by others into "shameful acts of night revelling."

His guilt was compounded by the death of a very intimate friend. Several times he thought of suicide. One night he was on his way to the river to drown himself, when he was attracted to the singing of a group in the distance. He drew closer. When he got to the house, he discovered that it was a Methodist prayer meeting.<sup>17</sup>

His denominational prejudice to the Methodists would not permit him to go inside. His parents were Baptists and they had instilled a prejudice within young Stewart against the Methodists. Curiosity prompted him. After long hesitation, he entered the house and laid his case before the Methodist prayer meeting. He was amazed to find such sympathetic listeners. They urged him to "seek the last blessing with all his heart."

Later, he attended a camp meeting. It was conducted by

Marcus Lindsey.<sup>18</sup> John Stewart found himself on the mourners' bench. He stayed all night. At the break of day, new light broke into his life. After this experience he united with The Methodist Church.

Stewart developed the practice of evening devotion. One evening during his devotion, he felt the Call to preach. A voice spoke to him—"Thou shalt declare my counsel faithfully."

Unwilling to accept the Call, Stewart tried to conjure cogent reasons for his refusal. He felt unworthy to preach. He was not qualified for such a sacred task. He had an impulse to flee to Tennessee with friends. At the moment of decision, he was stricken with a severe illness. On his sick bed, he vowed if God would restore his health, he would preach. His health was restored. He accepted the Call to the Ministry. Without money, bread or credentials, he crossed the Muskingum River by faith. To his pleasant surprise he met some friendly Indians. They introduced him to other members of the tribe. Hence, the Indian tribe at Pipetown on the Upper Sandusky became his first missionary field.

Stewart's first congregation consisted of two persons: An old Indian man named "Big Tree" and an aged Indian woman named "Mary." They responded to his message gladly.

In the beginning Stewart was confronted with a language barrier. Soon Jonathan Pointer was found and he became his interpreter. Pointer was a Negro who had been imprisoned by the Indians in his youth. He had lived among the Wyandottes ever since. Through the interpreter, Stewart's message was received gladly. His first convert was "Big Tree." Later, four other tribal chiefs were converted to the Christian faith—*Between the Log, Monocue, Hicks and Peacock*. They united with The Methodist Church. This was the beginning of the Wyandotte Mission. In gratitude

for this mission, the Indians requested that it would remain Methodist forever.

The Wyandotte Mission began to flourish from the very beginning. Its success created a stir among others. The ordained preachers began to question Stewart's authority. He was a preacher without credentials. Yet, Stewart was baptizing and performing the marriage ceremony. Because of the developing ill-will, John Stewart was encouraged to apply for local license.

Stewart went to Urbana, Ohio, to a Quarterly Conference in March, 1819.<sup>19</sup> He was accompanied by some of his red brothers. They recommended him gladly for the license. According to the testimony of Moses Crane, the presiding elder of the Miami District, Stewart was granted local license almost unanimously by the Miami Quarterly Conference.

In 1822, Bishop William McKendree visited the Wyandotte Mission. He found the mission in prosperous condition. At the time of his visit it had a membership of 200.<sup>20</sup>

By the time of the Bishop's visit, Stewart's health had begun to fail. On September 17, 1823, he died. He was buried in the center of the Indian Reservation on the Upper Sandusky.<sup>21</sup>

John Stewart may be called one of the first charter members of the Alcoholics Anonymous Society. His work among the Wyandotte Indians was the genesis of the Home Missionary Movement. A missionary secretary, A. B. Leonard, said, "Our Missionary Society was formed to take care of John Stewart's Indians."<sup>22</sup> It led directly to the organization of the Missionary Society in 1819.<sup>23</sup>

The Wyandotte Mission is one of the ten official shrines of The Methodist Church.<sup>24</sup> In 1888, the General Conference took the initial step to make it a shrine. On May 3, 1888, the General Conference approved that: "The landmark of civilization and the cradle of Methodist Missions ought to be suit-

ably preserved and transmitted to future generations in a manner worthy of its historic importance."

This conference also elected five trustees for the property. They were authorized to "put the graves, grounds and building in good repair." Included were the tombstones of John Stewart and celebrated Christian chiefs—Between the Log, Gray Eyes and Monocue. In order that the work could be accomplished, the General Conference appropriated \$2,000. It authorized further, that the title of the property would be conveyed to the Missionary Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>25</sup>

The Negro had a stake in the beginning of the Sunday School in the United States. Francis Asbury is credited with the organization of the first Sunday School, according to the Raikes Plan. It was organized in the home of David Crenshaw in 1786.<sup>26</sup> Both Negro and white youths attended the Sunday School. One of the first converts was John Charleston, a Negro. Later, he became a local preacher.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was very appealing to the Negro during its formative period. In 1786, there were 1,890 colored members in the Church.<sup>27</sup> One thousand of these Negroes were in Antigua, West Indies.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps they got their start from the chapel established in Nathaniel Gilbert's home. On July 20, 1787, John Street Church reported a membership of 228 whites and 36 colored. On the same date, St. George Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania had a membership of 270 whites and 17 colored members. By 1790, the Negro membership increased to 11,682.<sup>29</sup> Richard Niebuhr asserts that the Negro members constituted twenty per cent of the Methodist membership in 1799.<sup>30</sup> By 1803, the Negro membership had increased to 22,453.

It is significant to note that The Methodist Episcopal Church was ministering to the spiritual needs of Mississippians prior to the organization of the Mississippi Mission

Conference. Even before Mississippi became a state in 1817, The Methodist Episcopal Church was working in the Mississippi territory.

In 1799, Francis Asbury sent a missionary into the Mississippi territory. Around the turn of the 19th century, the first Methodist society in Mississippi territory was organized in Washington, Mississippi.<sup>31</sup> At that time, Washington was the territorial capital. It is located in Adams County. The first society consisted of eight members, four men and four women. Two of the members—a man and his wife—were Negro slaves.

Lorenze Dow, the Methodist evangelist from Connecticut, donated the ground for the first Methodist Episcopal Church in Mississippi. This church will occupy a significant place in Mississippi history. It was in this church that the Constitutional Convention convened in 1817. Here was framed the organic law under which Mississippi was admitted into the Union.<sup>32</sup>

At first, the Mississippi territory was a district in the Western Conference. In 1806, the Mississippi District reported 132 white and 72 Negro members. In 1816, the General Conference authorized the organization of the Mississippi Conference. By that year, there were 1,576 white and 476 colored members. In 1844, The Methodist Episcopal Church could boast of 13,257 white, 115 Indians and 799 colored members in Mississippi.

With the growth of Negro membership within the church, new legislation was necessary to meet the emerging needs. The Christmas Conference of 1784 showed its passionate concern for men of color. Question 41 was asked:

“Are there any directions to be given concerning the Negroes?”

The answer was :

Let every preacher as often as possible meet them in classes and let the assistant always appoint a proper white person as their leader . . . Let the assistant also make a regular return to the conference of the number of Negroes in the society in the respective circuits.<sup>38</sup>

In 1800, the General Conference authorized the ordination of local preachers among colored people. In 1848, it permitted colored preachers to travel at the discretion of the bishops. The 1860 General Conference authorized the bishops to counsel with the local preachers in the presence of the presiding elder. In 1864, it voted to encourage colored preachers for colored congregations.

From its genesis, The Methodist Episcopal Church has manifested a genuine concern for the men of color. Likewise, Negroes have always responded to The Methodist Church. For them, it was affectionately called the "Mother Church."

The following chapters will highlight the events and work of The Methodist Church with the Negroes in the Southwest since 1865. Specific emphasis will be placed upon the accomplishments among men of color within Mississippi. The influence of the social milieu and the political climate will be indicated. The effect of the General Conference legislation upon the work will also be shown. Due recognition will be given to the Board of Missions and Freedmen's Aid Society as they served to minister to the emerging needs of the people of color in the Southwest.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

(1864 - 1868)

ALMOST ONE YEAR prior to Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, The Methodist Episcopal Church had begun to evangelize the Southwest. For twenty years The Methodist Episcopal Church had been deprived of this glorious opportunity by insuperable barriers. The Plan of Separation adopted by the 1844 General Conference had given tacit approval to allocating this region to The Methodist Episcopal Church South. Hence, The Methodist Episcopal Church had not been actively engaged in work in the Deep South.

As victory seemed imminent for the Union Army, The Methodist Episcopal Church accentuated its efforts here. The leaders of The Methodist Episcopal Church sought permission from the government officials to occupy the South for missionary purposes. Outstanding among the leaders in this endeavor were Bishops Edward Raymond Ames and Matthew Simpson.

The War Department issued the following Adjutant General's Orders on November 30, 1862:

To the Generals Commanding the Departments of Missouri, the Tennessee and the Gulf, and all Generals and Officers Commanding Armies, Detachments, and Posts and all Officers in the Service of the United States in the above-mentioned Departments:

You are hereby directed to place at the disposal of Reverend Bishop Ames all houses of worship belonging to The Methodist Episcopal Church South in which a loyal minister who has been appointed by a loyal bishop of said church does not officiate.

It is a matter of great importance to the government in its efforts to restore tranquility to the community and peace to the nation, that Christian ministers should by example and precept, support and foster the loyal sentiment of the people.

Bishop Ames enjoys the entire confidence of this Department and no doubt it is entertained that all ministers who may be appointed by him will be entirely loyal. You are expected to give him all the aid, countenance and support practicable in the execution of his important mission. You are also authorized and directed to furnish Bishop Ames and his clerk with transportation and subsistence when it can be done without prejudice to the service and will afford them courtesy, assistance and protection.<sup>1</sup>

By order of the Secretary of War

When this authority was released, The Methodist Episcopal Church began immediately to devise plans to occupy the South for missionary purposes.

### The Memorable 1864 General Conference

When the 1864 General Conference convened in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, it took legal action necessary to accomplish this arduous task. The Missionary Board was reorganized for the increased responsibility. In short, the General Conference devised a strategy and a detailed plan of action to win the South for Christ and The Methodist Episcopal Church.

Anticipating the early emancipation of the Negroes, the General Conference was confronted with the moot question—"What shall we do with the Negroes?" Some preferred to phrase the question in this manner: "How shall we receive the Negroes into our Communion?"

The Conference had to make a decision on the Church's stance toward the Negroes. Three views were enunciated:

*First:* The Negroes should be encouraged to unite with the independent Negro branches of Methodists—The African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. As an incentive, several white ministers had already shown friendly gestures toward the ministers of these Negro denominations. Ministers of these denominations were invited to speak from the pulpit of the white churches.

*Second:* Ecclesiastical equality was advocated. Although

this view was the sentiment of a minority group, they were very vociferous in their view. According to this view, the Negro ministers would be admitted into the white annual conferences with all rights, privileges and immunities as accorded all other ministers. Reasons advanced for this view were theological, social, compensatory and political. All men are one in Christ. Through his reconciling love, we are brothers. Christ died for all men and he draws all men to him by his reconciling love. The view has also social implications. If men are to mature into the full stature of manhood, they must be afforded all social privileges. The privilege to join the church of his choice is no exception. The Negro had proved his loyalty to the nation through his soldiery. As compensation for his sacrificial service, he should, like others, reap all benefits derived from the war. If we prize the triumph of freedom that God has enabled our arms to win, let us remember that it has been won with the cooperation of the colored men. "To grant the Negroes ecclesiastical equality would also be politically advantageous. The nation needed the suffrage of the true and loyal blacks to balance the corrupt vote of the aristocratic traitor in the South."<sup>2</sup> The Negro would not remain in the Church with second-class citizenship. The walkout in 1816 had evidenced this fact.

*Third:* The establishment of Mission Conferences for the Negroes within the Church. This view was a compromise between the others. It was a proximate goal. The rationale for this view was that Negroes could best develop into mature and responsible churchmen through separate and distinct conference organizations. This view prevailed in the 1864 General Conference.

### **The Methodist Episcopal Church Crossed The Rubicon**

Again the General Conference of 1864 faced a grave decision. Twenty years earlier, it made a decision about the Negro as a slave. In Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, its concern was with the Negro in a different status—role relationship. He was no longer property, but property owner. He was not slave, but a brother.

The Episcopal address set the stage for action. By now it was a time honored custom for the message to highlight areas of social concern and to suggest guide lines for actions for the social well being of the Church.

Bishop Levi Scott was entrusted with the responsibility of reading the message at this conference. In reference to men of color, he said :

We deem it proper to call attention to the Section of Discipline in relation to our colored membership. The Provision adopted by the General Conference in 1856, through an advance on former legislation, is not sufficient to meet the necessities of the colored people. The time has now come in our judgment when the General Conference should carefully consider what measures can be added to give increased efficiency to our work among them.<sup>3</sup>

On May 27, 1864, Bishop Matthew Simpson called to the attention of the General Conference the necessity for additional disciplinary provisions relating to the organization of conferences among the colored preachers. Immediately, the General Conference authorized the appointment of a committee consisting of the bishops and one delegate from each of the following annual conferences: Baltimore, East Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New Jersey. This committee was under a mandate to draft the necessary legislation and report back to the General Conference.

Within hours, the Drafting Committee was ready to report to the General Conference. The speed at which the instrument was prepared indicated some prior preparation. The following resolution was adopted by the General Conference on May 27, 1864:

1. Resolved, by the General Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church in Conference assembled that it is the duty of our church to encourage colored pastorates for

colored people wherever practical and to contribute to their efficiency by every means in our power ;

2. Resolved, That the efficiency of the said pastorates can be best promoted by *distinct* conference organization and that, therefore, the bishops are hereby authorized to organize among our colored ministers and population Mission Conferences—one or more—where in their godly judgment, the exigencies of the work may demand it and should more than one be organized to determine their boundaries until the meeting of the next General Conference, the said conference or conferences to possess all powers usual to Mission Annual Conferences provided that nothing in the resolution be so construed as to impair the existing constitutional rights of our colored members on the one hand, or to forbid, on the other hand, the transfer of white ministers to said conference or conferences where it may be practical and deemed necessary.
3. Resolved, That our General Missionary Committee be requested to take into careful consideration the condition of our colored brethren and should conferences be organized among them, make to them—consistently with other demands upon its funds—such appropriations as may be essential to success.<sup>4</sup>

With the adoption of this legislation, the legal machinery for the organization of Mission Conferences among Negroes was enacted. However, other legislative steps were necessary in order for the men of color to qualify for membership in these conferences.

Before adjournment on this same day, the General Conference adopted the following enabling act :

That in order to constitute the first conference of colored members, the rule of the Discipline requiring a probation of two years be so *suspended* as to allow bishops to organize into one or more annual conferences such colored local elders as have travelled two or more years under a presiding elder and shall be recommended by a quarterly conference and by at least ten elders who are members of an annual conference,<sup>5</sup>

With the adoption of the resolution authorizing the establishment of colored conferences for colored preachers and the approval of the enabling act, The Methodist Episcopal Church could now organize Negro conferences for colored preachers. It had crossed the Rubicon but not without animated debate.

The debate of the issue did not close with the adjournment sine die of the General Conference. The Reverend Gilbert Haven, later a bishop in the church, made this caustic remark:

We have not dared to do right. We cling to a false and fatal notion which is paralyzing our arm. We presume to distinguish His children on account of certain shades of complexion or sources of distant origin. In organizing the Negro preachers into exclusive and independent missionary conferences, the Church was (he felt) fixing upon the colored people an ignominious badge of inferiority which the State was attempting to remove.<sup>6</sup>

Others were less critical in their views. One writer vindicates the action in these words:

Such separate conferences were essential, too, because it was believed that through them the greatest good could be accomplished. We have for the same reason our German Conferences and our Scandinavian, French and Welsh Missions.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Election of Edward Thomson**

Leadership is an ascribed role over a relatively long period of time. The leadership role in the ministry to the Negroes in the Church was a very significant role. On May 30, 1864, the General Conference elected Edward Thomson on the first ballot with 123 votes. His election was at a psychological propitious moment in the Church's history.

Among his primary responsibilities was the organization of a Mission Conference in the Southwest. By background,

temperament and experience, he was equipped for the leadership role ascribed to him.

He was born in Portsea, England on October 12, 1810.<sup>8</sup> At the age of eight, his family moved to the United States and settled in Wooster, Ohio. Here he received his elementary training. He was a prodigy, indeed. As Plato referred to Aristotle, he was the *Nous*, the intellect of the school. At 19, he graduated from the Medical College at the University of Pennsylvania. For two years, he practiced medicine. During this period, his unbelief in God was shaken by the dynamic preaching of Russell Bigelow. In December, 1831, he was converted in a Methodist revival. Although he was of Baptist background, he united with The Methodist Episcopal Church. This decision met with great disfavor on the part of his deacon father.

Within a few months after his conversion experience, he became a local preacher. In September, 1832, he was admitted on trial in the Ohio Conference. For six years he served in the pastorate of this conference.

In 1838, he was elected as President of Ohio Wesleyan University. For 14 years, he served creditably in this administrative position.

During his early ministry, he became a formidable foe of the slave system. In 1856, he was a delegate to the General Conference from the Ohio Conference. On May 26, 1856, he made a memorable speech on slavery. The following words are excerpts from the speech:

Is it right that one man should hold another as property? What is man?—a moral, rational, immortal, accountable being—capable of moral discernment—acting under a moral law with a moral nature—capable of moral enjoyment . . . To buy a Pagan slave to put him into a process of emancipation; for a Jubilee was proclaimed every seven years for Hebrew slaves, and every fifty years for all inhabitants. The

New Testament is not pro-slavery, it is not even tolerant of it. The mistake made by Bishop Asbury when he lowered the standard of the Discipline to establish the church in the South was one of the greatest ever made by a mortal man. Would you go to Utah and write in your Discipline that no man might have more than three wives? . . . If Asbury could see the results of his course, he would weep. . . . Will the Church in the South ever rise and take her stand in favor of emancipation while there are ministers, bishops, and archbishops who are justifying slavery? <sup>9</sup>

It is reported that Thomson was so dynamic that even his fiercest enemies were brought to their feet in response to the message.

In 1860, Thomson was elected as the Editor of the New York Christian Advocate. With his pen he continued to throw printer's ink at the calamitous effect of slavery upon the enslaved. From the editorship, he was elevated to the episcopacy. His primary task was to assist in healing the wound created by slavery in the Southwest.

In 1864, Edward Thomson was the Chairman of the Committee on Freedmen in the General Conference. The Committee recommended on May 20, 1864, the following resolution:

1. Resolved, That in the events which have thrown the thousands of freedmen upon the benevolence of the humane and loyal people of the North, we recognize a providential call to the Christian public for contributions for their physical relief and mental and moral elevation and especially to the Church of Christ for the means of their evangelization . . .
2. Resolved, That the best interest of the freedmen and of the country demand legislation that shall foster and protect this people, and we hereby respectfully but earnestly urge upon Congress the importance of establishing as soon as practicable a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs as contemplated in the bills now pending.<sup>10</sup>

The Act creating the Freedmen's Bureau was voted on

March 3, 1865. It did an indispensable work in the feeding and care of Southern refugees, white and black. It helped the emancipated slaves to get a new lease on life. The Methodist Episcopal Church did no little part in getting this legislation passed. Credit must be given to Edward Thomson.

### **The Mississippi Department Paves The Way**

In 1864, the General Conference charged the Mississippi Department with the responsibility of making preparation for the organization of colored conferences in the Southwest. The Missionary Department organized "third-class missions." By third-class missions was meant—"Missions in the United States and territories not included in the bounds of Annual Conferences."<sup>11</sup> To the Mississippi Department was entrusted the supervisory responsibility of the third-class missions in the Southwest. It included Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

After the General Conference of 1864, Bishop Edward Thomson was entrusted with the supervision of the Mississippi Department. Prior to May, 1864, Bishop Edward Ames was in charge. On March 20, 1864, John P. Newman was appointed by Bishop Ames as the supervisor of the missionary work in the Southwest. Joseph Welsh served as Newman's assistant.

At the time of his appointment in the Southwest, Newman was serving the Washington Square Church in the New York District in the New York Conference. He left this church with 228 members and a salary of \$1,800 to go South. It was the second ranking church on the New York District—St. Paul Church paid a salary of \$2,500.

Newman did not go to New Orleans at a financial sacrifice. He received a salary of \$3,000 for his new responsibility from the Missionary Department.

In addition, he was appointed to the Corondelet Methodist

Church in New Orleans. His estimated salary at this church was \$1,800.<sup>12</sup>

### Newman Begins His Mission Work

On arrival in New Orleans, Newman found tense conditions and mixed emotions. On March 23, 1864, Dr. Newman gave his inaugural address to a large congregation. They were primarily spectators. He cited three reasons for the mission of a New Yorker to New Orleans:

1. It was in harmony with the theory of labor as held by The Methodist Episcopal Church North. (Ours is The Methodist Episcopal Church. We are not sectional.) When the churches separated in 1844, The Methodist Episcopal Church did not relinquish its right to evangelize the South.
2. It was required by the present state of the Country.
3. The movement was justified by the present disorganized and destitute condition of the Southern churches. Their former ministers had fled or had been silenced. Some were imprisoned or banished. It was, he claimed, the solemn duty of the mother church to send shepherds to these deserted and scattered flocks.

Despite the cogent reasons expressed, Newman was confronted with two embarrassments:

1. The question of ownership of the property. On every hand, The Methodist Episcopal Church was denounced as "church robbers." He answered this indictment in these words: "The General government has seen fit to seize these churches but it has not conveyed their title to us. There has been no passing of deeds."
2. The second accusation was that The Methodist Episcopal Church was a political church. The church South had advocated the separation of church and state. This was the weapon used by the Southern churchmen against The Methodist Episcopal Church. "In combating the rivalry of the Northern Church, The Methodists of the South con-

stantly appealed to the traditional dislike of ecclesiastical interference in politics.”<sup>13</sup>

The new movement in the South faced strong opposition in the very beginning. The enemies in the South accused The Methodist Episcopal Church of working in collusion with the Federal Government to crush them. This only added salt to wounds inflicted in 1844. Hence, Newman writes: “An effectual door is opened before us but with many adversaries.”

### **The Pioneering Work of John Paul Newman**

Despite strong opposition, the Methodist Episcopal Church made a major breakthrough in 1864 and 1865. During this early ministry of Newman in the South, the nation was still in the midst of the Civil War. After the war, the South was agitated by political questions of the most exciting nature.

On April 3, 1864, Newman conducted his first worship at Corondelet Church. Although this church was one of The Methodist Episcopal Church South’s most beautiful churches with a large and intelligent congregation, the membership had dwindled to a mere handful of members. Members who had formerly attended the church were not attending now. Some followed their leading trustees and stewards and united with a neighboring Presbyterian church.<sup>14</sup>

Newman read the General Rules, articles of faith and the chapter in the Discipline regarding slavery. He extended an invitation to Christian discipleship. He received sixty persons on the first Sunday.<sup>15</sup> This was heartening, indeed, to the new movement. He proceeded to reorganize Felicity Street and Marais Street Churches. The work began to grow in New Orleans. Later, he organized congregations in Algiers, Gretna and Baton Rouge.

On November 18, 1865, President Andrew Johnson ordered Newman to vacate the churches of The Methodist Episcopal Church South. Newman had to discover places where they could worship. He had great difficulty in finding places in New Orleans. After several weeks of constant search, he found two halls for the congregations which had previously been located at Corondelet and Felicity Streets.

The mission work among the colored population began to prosper from the beginning. By December, 1865, there were eleven men in the Mississippi Department. They were dispersed in the three states. Of all the arduous years in the history of Mississippi Methodism, none was more consumed of unremitting endeavor than 1865.

### Progress Report For 1865

By 1865, the work of The Methodist Episcopal Church was crowned with some measurable success in the Southwest. Five churches had been organized. By December, 1865, these home missionaries reported 2,216 full members and 476 probationers. Church property had an estimated value of \$47,000.<sup>16</sup>

### A Covenant Agreement for the Pioneer Preachers in the Southwest

Special aids were developed by Dr. Newman in consultation with Bishop Ames and Bishop Thomson for the Pioneer Preachers. These aids were prepared in the form of a covenant. The following illustrates the agreement:

*First:* You, \_\_\_\_\_, the bearer, are hereby authorized to preach the gospel according to the doctrines of The Methodist Episcopal Church;

*Second:* You are to be governed by the Discipline of the Church;

*Third:* You are to devote your time exclusively to the work of the Christian ministry; namely, your mornings to study,

and to aid you in which you are hereby furnished with a copy of the Bible, our Hymn book, our Book of the Discipline and Wesley's notes and sermons; your afternoons to visiting from house to house; your evenings and Sabbaths to the holding of religious meetings.

*Fourth:* In your public and private deportment, you are to be governed by the rules laid down in our Book of Discipline for the conduct of preachers and also by following special directions authorized by Bishop Thomson:

Our Missionaries will go in the spirit of their divine Master and devote themselves to preaching Christ and Him crucified . . . adopt our ancient motto—the friend of all: the enemies of none.

*Fifth:* You are to be subject to the presiding elders or superintendent appointed over you, and to the bishop having supervision of our missionary work included in what is known as the "Missionary Department;"

*Sixth:* You are to go to the field of labor assigned you; and you are authorized there to collect congregations, organize Sunday schools and raise subscriptions for the building of houses of worship; according to instructions which may be given you from time to time by your presiding elder or superintendent;

*Seventh:* You are to make to your superintendent a monthly report in writing as to number of meetings held by you, the size of the congregations, the general progress and success of the work, and all other matters of interest concerning it.

*Eighth:* For the faithful compliance with the above conditions, you are to receive the sum of \$400.00 per annum, two hundred dollars of which you will receive from the Missionary Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church, payable in monthly installments and the balance you are authorized to collect from your congregations over which you are placed, keeping a strict account therefore and reporting the same to your superintendent.

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I, the undersigned, do solemnly promise in the fear of God faithfully to observe the above instructions to the best of my ability.<sup>17</sup>

Date

**Station and Preachers  
in the Mississippi Department<sup>18</sup>  
1864 - 1865**

| <i>Appointments</i>         | <i>Ministers</i>       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ames Church              | H. G. Jackson          |
| 2. Eagle Hall               | W. M. Henry            |
| 3. Wesley Chapel            | Anthony Ross *         |
| 4. Marais Street            | Scott Chinn *          |
| 5. First Street             | Henry Green *          |
| 6. Jefferson and Carrollton | Emperor Williams *     |
| 7. Baton Rouge Ct.          | Hardy Ryan *           |
| 8. Thibodeaux and Houma     | (S. M. Small *         |
|                             | (W. M. Murrell *       |
| 9. Texas—Assistant Supt.    | Joseph Welsh           |
| 10. Galveston               | To be supplied         |
| 11. Houston                 | David (Elias) Dibble * |

\* Colored Pioneer Preachers

### The Second Christmas Conference

One week after the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution had been ratified, the Second Christmas Conference was called. It was a "repetition in ecclesiastical history." The First Christmas Conference was convened in Baltimore, Maryland, December 25, 1784. It was the birthday of The Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Second Christmas Conference was convened in Wesley Chapel, located on South Liberty Street, New Orleans, Louisiana on Monday, December 25, 1865. It was called to organize the colored preachers into a Mission Conference in the Southwest.

Bishop Edward Thomson was assigned the task of organizing this Conference. At 9 a.m., the first session of the Mississippi Mission Conference was called to order. The Conference opened by singing the 204th hymn. According to the 1848 Hymnal (the latest edition) the words of the hymn were:

Go preach my Gospel, saith the Lord—  
Bid the whole world my Grace receive;

By all the works that I have done,  
By all the wonders ye shall do.

Teach all the nations my commands,  
I'm with you 'til the world shall end,  
All power is trusted in my hand  
I can destroy, I will defend.

The singing of this hymn was apropos for the significant occasion. It set forth the purpose of the Conference through melody. The Bishop followed by reading the Holy Writ. He read from the Tenth Chapter of Second Corinthians. The following words from this chapter suggest the Mission of the Church:

For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though, we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ; not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having faith, when your faith is increased that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly to preach the Gospel in the region beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

Following the reading of the Scriptures, the Bishop invoked God's blessings upon the occasion. He closed the devotional period with an address: "Why are we here?" Three reasons were cited:

- (a) We have the means to do good and this last field invites us.
- (b) We should aim to strengthen the Government and this will follow the union of the churches of this Country.
- (c) We come to you, the colored brethren of the South who were separated from us in 1844. The opportunity is now offered to you in return.<sup>19</sup>

### The Mississippi Mission Conference Organizes

Under the spell of inspiration, Bishop Thomson proceeded to organize the Conference. In speaking to the assembled group, he said:

I feel authorized to organize an Annual Conference in New Orleans in view of circumstances which surround us, and I hereby do recognize the following brethren as members:

J. P. Newman, Joseph Welsh, Nelson L. Brakeman and William Henry as elders; H. G. Jackson as deacon.<sup>20</sup>

The original members of the Mississippi Mission Conference were white ministers. They had come from conferences in the North on a "lend lease system." From the Northwest Indiana Conference went Nelson L. Brakeman as missionary to Baton Rouge and H. G. Jackson as a missionary to New Orleans. The Philadelphia Conference released Joseph Welsh from Doylestown to work among the freedmen in the South. Likewise, the East Genesee Conference sent W. M. Henry as a missionary to the South. The last two ministers were itinerant missionaries throughout the South.

On a whole, these missionaries were young. The average age of the men was 31. Newman was the senior of the group. He was 39. The youngest was H. G. Jackson. He had just passed his 27th birthday.

Neither of these missionaries had been in the itinerant ministry very long. Newman was admitted in the Oneida Conference, Central New York, in 1849. He had served several years in the pastorate. Nelson L. Brakeman was admitted into the Northwest Indiana Conference in 1851. He accepted the chaplaincy of the 21st Regiment, Indiana Volunteers. From this position, he transferred to the Mississippi Mission Conference. William M. Henry had been admitted in the East

Genesee Conference in 1863. Henry G. Jackson was admitted in the Northwest Indiana Conference in 1862. He had served as the principal of Stockwell Collegiate Institute. He was the best trained of the missionaries. He received his A.B. and M.A. degrees from DePauw University.

### **J. P. Newman Elected Secretary**

The Mississippi Mission Conference elected J. P. Newman as its first secretary.<sup>21</sup> This was not an accident but imperative. At the time of organization, there was no Negro yet a member of the Conference. In fact, there was not a Negro qualified to be secretary. One Negro expressed it in these words:

One of you, white ministers, will need to be secretary for we cannot write.

Another report substantiates this assertion in these words:

Only four of the first thirty colored clergymen enrolled by the Conference in South Carolina, Mississippi and Texas could read simple large print and none could write.<sup>22</sup>

### **First Negroes Admitted Into The Mississippi Mission Conference**

On December 26, 1865, eleven colored ministers made ecclesiastical history. They were the first to be admitted into a conference in the Southwest. The following men were admitted on trial in the Mississippi Mission Conference:

|                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| James M. Bryant      | Samuel Osborne                 |
| David (Elias) Dibble | Anthony Ross                   |
| Henry Green          | Hardy Ryan                     |
| Thomas Kennedy       | Samuel M. Small                |
| Scott Chinn          | Emperor Williams <sup>23</sup> |
|                      | William Murrell                |

In addition, one white minister, Richard K. Diossey, was admitted on trial. These history making clergymen have the

distinct honor of dating their ministry with the Christmas Conference of 1865.

### The First Ordination Service

One memorable moment in a Methodist minister's career is his first Ordination. It initiates him into the Ministry of the Church. Few ever forget an initiation. It usually makes an indelible imprint upon the memory.

The ordination sermon was preached by Bishop Thomson, using as a text: I Corinthians 2:1-2. After the sermon, the following men were ordained deacons in the Church:

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| James M. Bryant | John Goodwin                   |
| John Campbell   | Henry Green                    |
| David Ennis     | Thomas Kennedy                 |
| William Murrell | Samuel Small                   |
| Samuel Osborne  | Anthony Ross                   |
| Hardy Ryan      | Emperor Williams <sup>24</sup> |

When the Bishop admonished these ministers to:

Take thou authority to preach the word and to administer the ordinance of baptism, marriage and the burial of the dead in the absence of an elder;

he, at the same time, authorized the candidates by the power invested in him as a bishop of the Church. "By the laying on of hand" of the bishop, these men were ordained deacons in the Church. They became the "Twelve Apostles" of the 19th Century in the Southwest.

On December 27, 1865, Bishop Thomson ordained four men as elders in the Church of God. The following men were so honored:

Anthony Ross  
Henry Green  
Scott Chinn  
H. G. Jackson, a white clergyman

The orders of Richard K. Diossey were recognized from The Methodist Protestant Church.

This was the first interracial ordination service in the Deep South. In commenting upon the event, J. P. Newman, the secretary of the conference, remarked:

“Was this the commencement of a new Era in the South?”<sup>25</sup>

In an editorial, *The New York Christian Advocate*, November 8, 1866, made the following comment:

When the Mississippi Mission Conference organized at New Orleans in December, 1865, the whole audience, composed of whites and blacks, were affected; some to tears, some to shouts at the ordination of colored ministers with white ones. There they stood, side by side, at the same altar, and the same hands which were laid upon the latter were laid upon the former.

### The Centennial Celebration

On May 27, 1864, the General Conference authorized a Centenary of American Methodism. The following report was adopted:

The Centenary of Methodism in America shall be celebrated by all our churches and people with devout thanksgiving, by special religious services and liberal thank offering. . . .

This celebration shall commence on the first Tuesday in October, 1866 and continue through the month at such times and places as may best suit the convenience of the societies.<sup>26</sup>

The General Conference further recommended that the local funds should be appropriated to the cause of education and church extension. Each Annual Conference was to provide for the delivery of a Memorial sermon before its own body at the session next preceding the Centennial Celebration,

The Mississippi Mission Conference voted on December 26, 1865 to participate in the Centennial celebration. The General Conference had recommended that a Memorial sermon would be preached in the 1865 session. The Conference elected J. P. Newman to preach the Memorial sermon and N. L. Brakeman was chosen to preach the Missionary sermon.

The Conference elected the following persons to constitute the Centennial Committee:

G. W. Ames, L. B. Whitmore, John Jones (laymen), J. P. Newman and Anthony Ross, ministers.

The committee was interracial; it was also made up of both laymen and ministers.

### **Thomson Institute Authorized**

The Mississippi Mission Conference began in true Methodist fashion. It authorized the establishment of a theological institute to be located in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was to be named Thomson Institute in honor of Bishop Thomson. The institute was to be established "to educate the colored ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, though 'color' was by no means to be a necessary qualification for admission as a student." It began with an "open door policy."<sup>27</sup>

The Thomson Institute was opened officially on January 16, 1866 with the Reverend J. P. Newman as its first President. Through the kindness of the trustees of First Street Church, the institute began there with temporary quarters. On the first day, three students matriculated. By the end of the year, 11 students had enrolled. The first matriculants were:

Charles Downs  
Evans Green

E. Jackson  
James Hayward

Edward Hayward  
David Gregory  
E. Banks

Felix Lander  
Charles Washington  
Joseph Gould  
James Davis

The need for ministers in the Southwest was so urgent that very often the training of the ministers was interrupted to supply pulpits.

The Institute began with an appropriation of \$50,000 from the Missionary Department of the Church. This fund was to be used in the theological training of the ministers. Of this amount, \$1,223 was used in scholarships for the first year.

The Institute had periods of growth and decline. In 1868, the president reported 14 students and four professors. Other years were not so fortunate.

In 1871, the Institute moved to Baldwin, Louisiana. It became an integral part of Thomson University. Prior to the transfer, the school had been closed temporarily for two years. When it reopened at Baldwin, it only had night classes three times a week from seven to nine. This schedule was arranged to the convenience of the working students. It reported sixteen students enrolled in the night school.

In 1873, Thomson Biblical Institute merged with Normal and Thomson University at Bayou Teche. A philanthropist, John Baldwin, gave \$20,000 for the new venture. The merged institution became New Orleans University. It was approved by the Louisiana Conference in 1873. In the same year, it was incorporated by the State of Louisiana. This was the beginning of Dillard University.

### **Appropriations From The Mission Department**

The Mission Department of the Church made substantial financial contributions to the Mission work in the Southwest in 1865. It appropriated \$15,100 to the Conference. This

amount was allocated by the Committee on Missions in the following manner :

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| New Orleans District | \$7,400             |
| Opelousas District   | 2,800               |
| Mississippi District | 2,300               |
| Texas District       | 2,600 <sup>28</sup> |

### The Appointments For 1866

On December 27, 1865, Bishop Thomson asked question 17: "*Where are the preachers stationed this year?*"

He answered the question by making the following appointments :

|                                                            |                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>New Orleans District</i> —J. P. Newman, Presiding Elder |                              |
| Ames Church                                                | H. G. Jackson                |
| Fourth District                                            | W. M. Henry                  |
| Wesley                                                     | Anthony Ross                 |
| Marais Street                                              | Scott Chinn                  |
|                                                            | (Union Chapel) <sup>29</sup> |
| First Street                                               | Henry Green                  |
| Ursuline Street                                            | To be supplied               |
| Greatman Street                                            | To be supplied               |
| St. Mary's Church                                          | To be supplied               |
| Jefferson and Carrollton                                   | Emperor Williams             |
| Madisonville                                               | To be supplied               |
| Baton Rouge                                                | Hardy Ryan                   |

|                                                           |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Opelousas District</i> —R. K. Diossey, Presiding Elder |                |
| Franklin and New Iberia                                   | Thomas Kennedy |
| Thibodeaux and Houma                                      | W. M. Murrell  |
| Alexandria                                                | Samuel Small   |
| Donaldsonville and Napoleonville                          | J. M. Bryant   |
| Opelousas                                                 | To be supplied |
| Natitoches                                                | To be supplied |
| Shreveport                                                | To be supplied |
| Monroe                                                    | To be supplied |
| La fourche                                                | To be supplied |

*Mississippi District*—N. L. Brakeman, Presiding Elder

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| Vicksburg   | To be supplied |
| Natchez     | To be supplied |
| Grand Gulf  | To be supplied |
| Port Gibson | To be supplied |
| Brandon     | To be supplied |
| Yazoo City  | To be supplied |
| Canton      | To be supplied |
| Princeton   | To be supplied |
| Greenville  | To be supplied |
| Grenada     | To be supplied |

*Texas District*—Joseph Welsh, Presiding Elder

|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Galveston   | Samuel Osborne       |
| Houston     | David (Elias) Dibble |
| San Antonio | To be supplied       |
| Austin      | To be supplied       |

The ministers were assigned to *places* rather than organized congregations. There were only three organized Negro congregations—Wesley, First Street and Marais Street—and two white congregations—Ames and Fourth Street. The Negro churches had an aggregate membership of 2,128. There were 88 white members in the Conference.

In commenting upon these appointments, the *Christian Advocate*, January 18, 1866, page 20, reported:

Three of the presiding elders are white men; of the fourth we can not say, while the greater part of the pastors are pretty certainly colored men.

### **The Mississippi Mission Conference Convenes In Its Second Annual Session**

The second annual session of the conference convened in First Street Church on December 13, 1866. The presiding bishop was Matthew W. Simpson.

The Negro members looked forward to this conference with great enthusiasm. They wanted to "behold the man"

that influenced President Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. He was the one, also, who had been chosen to give the Eulogy for the assassinated President in Springfield, Illinois. For the Negroes, Bishop Simpson was their "Earthly Messiah."

The colored people travelled for miles to be in attendance at this conference session. Some had travelled 400 miles. Among the weary travellers was Aunt Betsy.<sup>30</sup> She was on hand to "confer with the Bishop and elders about the interest of the work among her people." Already she was an historical character in Mississippi Methodism. She antedated the Committee on Pastoral Relations by sixty-two years. On May 29, 1928, the General Conference authorized the Committee on Pastoral Relations and Pulpit Supply. Its function was to co-operate with the pastor regarding supply preachers and with the District Superintendent and Presiding Elder regarding pastoral relations.<sup>31</sup> On that day, the General Conference legalized what Aunt Betsy had done sixty-two years earlier.

### **Bishop Simpson Speaks**

In the opening session, Bishop Simpson spoke to the Conference. The following are excerpts from this message:

Your conference is in its infancy and occupying a section of the country from which we were excluded for years; you form, as it were, an outpost—a fort on the borders of our Zion. But Providence designs that you shall be a great centre of power. Vast responsibilities are laid upon you. Our church here is to be shaped by you; yours is a molding influence.<sup>32</sup>

### **The New Orleans Riot**

On July 30, 1866, the conflict in New Orleans developed into a blood riot. During the riot, 48 Republicans—mostly Negroes—were killed and 166 wounded by city police.<sup>33</sup>

The precise cause of the riot was obscure. It seemed to

have been inspired politically. It was somewhat related to the reassembling of the State Convention. The Convention had met two years earlier for reorganization. It adjourned without a resolution to reassemble at the call of the Chairman. History authenticates again that riots feed on authority's default.

Hostile attacks were made against Northerners and Southern loyalists. Some were murdered; others were wounded. Among the wounded was the Reverend Henry Jackson, pastor of Ames Church. He was shot through both lungs. Besides, he was thrown in jail. As soon as he was released and able to travel, he returned to Manchester, Indiana to recuperate fully.

In reporting upon the Riot, the *Christian Advocate*, August 16, 1866, page 26, said:

The New Orleans Massacre—Murderous attack on Reverend Mr. Jackson—The riot, instigated and conducted by the police was a downright massacre and one of the most barbarous and fiendish ever recorded.

Direct or indirect results of the riot were in evidence for an indefinite period of time. The new churches at Jefferson and Carrollton were completely destroyed by fire. The origin of the fire was never determined. The church at Jefferson was the first Methodist Episcopal Church built in Louisiana in two decades. It had been dedicated on March 18, 1866 by Dr. J. P. Newman. The churches were insured to the amount of \$4,000. They cost \$6,000.<sup>34</sup>

### Mission Work Faced Strong Opposition

It was indeed a herculean task to revitalize the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southwest. It was opposed by religious and secular forces.

The already established churches in the Southwest viewed

the Methodist Church as an unethical alien church. The report of the Committee on Religious Conditions of the South, December 15, 1866, evidences this fact in the following excerpts:

Other denominations, however, are not idle. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is putting forth all her strength and has preferred claim for exclusive possession of this field. Willingly admitting, as we do, their full right to do all they can to meet the great emergency. Neither they nor we should be blind to the fact that by no possibility of effort can they accomplish one twentieth of the work necessary to be done.

The Methodist Episcopal Church South still proclaims herself the best friend of the colored race and is making renewed efforts to retain them within her fold. More powerful than either of the organizations named, more sagacious in her plans, more thorough in organization, more determined in purpose, more energetic in action, more crafty in measures and richer in money than all the Protestant churches combined, is the Roman Catholic Church. It is no secret that the Romish hierarchy is resolved in an earnest and general effort to offset the waning power of that church in the old world by vast acquisitions in the new. Strangely indifferent to the condition of the black man as a slave, her shrewd leaders are profoundly earnest to avail themselves of his full power when free.<sup>35</sup>

In his report to the General Missionary Committee, Dr. J. P. Newman described the situation in these words:

The beginnings were small, the field immense, the labourers few; the embarrassments, many; the prospects not bright. We were on an enemy's land; a majority of the white population watched us with a jealous eye. The old established churches refused to recognize us as co-workers in a common cause, the Northern resident citizens were afraid to worship with us as intruders. Yet the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the African Methodist Church have not ceased

to misrepresent our motives, to prophesy evil of our work, to mob our preachers and break up our services.

### **The Newspaper's Attack**

Some Southern editors employed their pen to discredit the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southwest. The following is a caustic statement from the New Orleans Christian Advocate (organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church South) :

The churchmen of the Presbyterians and the Methodist churches in the North are largely identified with the attempt of violent revolution. In fact, these godly gentlemen, who are scattered throughout the South, taking ecclesiastical guardianship of hundreds of thousands of the freedmen in the South, have a very large interest in this new order of things . . . Not only do these men enter into conspiracy but they enter very largely into it. We may as well wake up to the fact that the front and power of fanatical radicalism is in the Northern Methodist Church.<sup>36</sup>

In the Christian Advocate, July 12, 1866, an article entitled "Planting the Methodist Episcopal Church under Difficulties," the following statement is made on page 221 :

In some sections of the South, especially in the Southwest, there is a fiendish opposition to the efforts of preachers to organize and sustain churches in connection with Northern Methodism. There is more opposition among the ignorant and degraded of the white populace.

### **Some Success—In Spite of Opposition**

The Methodist Episcopal Church evidenced some growth in the Southwest. The reports from the presiding elders and pastors will show some measurable success as well as indicate some handicapping factors. The Senior Missionary and Presiding Elder of the New Orleans District, J. P. Newman, reports :

For the most part, our Missionaries have laboured among the people of color as a whole; their condition excites our pity: poor, ignorant, superstitious and debased, they are a sad commentary on the institution of domestic slavery.

Yet, we rejoice in their apparent improvement within a year. Taught to be honest, truthtelling, chaste, industrious and pious, they have illustrated these virtues in every day life. Thrown upon their own resources by fortune of war, they have proved their capacity for self-support. Not a few of them have purchased land, while a larger number cultivate the soil on shares . . . As an illustration of their frugality, the freedmen of New Orleans deposited in our Freedmen's Saving Bank from June to December, 1866, over \$26,000; they are a rising power; let us control it for God.<sup>37</sup>

The New Orleans District was a hot bed of conflict. Notwithstanding, it reported 3,146 full members and 600 probationers. Nine new churches had been erected at a probable cost of \$79,400.

The Opelousas District organized six circuits; five missions. It reported 1,617 members and 341 probationers. Nineteen men had been licensed to preach. Five churches had been built at a total cost of \$12,075.

The Mississippi District began the year with all places to be supplied. Not a single pastor was assigned to this virgin territory at the close of the 1865 Annual Conference. It showed marked growth. It reported 1,811 members and 390 probationers. Seventy-seven men had been granted local licenses. Nine new congregations were organized. Churches were organized in the following towns with the accompanying numerical strength:

Aberdeen—415  
Canton—200  
Corinth—63  
Columbus—398  
Grenada—96

Meridian—61  
Vicksburg—73  
Yazoo City—149

### **Pastors' Reports, 1866**

In addition to the reports of the Presiding Elders, Bishop Simpson asked each preacher to report on his labors for the year. This was the beginning of the Pastors' Reports in the Conference in the Southwest. The following are excerpts from the Pastors' Report:

Anthony Ross of the Wesley Church reported that he had 1500 members; 60 happy converts, 200 Sunday School scholars, a flourishing day school and an asylum for the aged and infirm members.

For the First Street Church, Henry Green reported that he "had a big pull on the 30th of July last, but now they have a pull the other way." He reported 450 members; 50 converts, 283 Sunday School scholars and a new school house which was built at a cost of \$600.00.

Full of native humor, Scott Chinn reported: "Seven hundred members and a congregation which was too large for his church." He had labored successfully among the Creoles. They were of African descent and of Catholic background. Their language was a mixture of French and Spanish. "In their religious delight, they declare that they like our American God."

A touching account of the burning of the churches at Carrollton and Jefferson was given by Emperor Williams. He reported of his plans to rebuild the churches. The Missionary Department shared in the rebuilding of the burned churches. It set a precedent for the Board of Missions to contribute to the rebuilding of the burned churches in Mississippi in 1964.

Samuel Small was a Pioneer Circuit Rider indeed. He travelled from Alexander to Shreveport proclaiming the Gospel in the Methodist fashion. He claimed that the people were ready recipients for the Christian Message. He reported 100 members, sixty converts, seventy Sunday School scholars and a day school.

### **Northern Conferences Take Actions Regarding The Mission In The Southwest**

The Northern Conferences did not only share their ministerial manpower but they expressed their passionate concern also. On September 9, 1866, the Northwest Indiana Conference sent a personal letter to Brother Nelson Brake-man. It also adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That to the utmost of our ability we will aid in furnishing the means of Grace to the people already in the South, including millions of freedmen whose chains, God in His Mercy has stricken off and the thousands of our communicants who are emigrating thither,

Resolved II, That in view of the wonderfully increased demand upon the liberality of the church, in consequence of the sudden opening of so vast a field, we will, to the utmost of our ability, labor to increase our contributions to the Missionary and to Church Extension societies in at least corresponding ratio.<sup>88</sup>

On April 15, 1866, the New York Conference approved the following resolution:

Whereas the attention of this Conference has been called to the New Orleans Advocate, ably edited by the Reverend J. P. Newman, D.D., late an honored member of this body, a paper devoted to Christianity, our country, and literature; a paper that acknowledged the manhood of Africa and seeks not only his melioration, but elevation; a paper that advocates the great principles of Justice and Freedom, therefore,

Resolved, That we hail with Joy, the New Orleans Advocate, regarding not only as a light shining in a dark place, but the harbinger of a brighter day, when the angelic song will be more fully realized on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

Resolved, That we sympathize with the editor in his delicate and difficult work, and that we heartily approve of the paper and the principles it advocates; that we cordially commend it to our people, and that we will use our influence to extend its circulation.

Resolved, further, That we request: William H. Evans, A. K. Sandford, Albert D. Vail and Alexander McLean to procure subscribers and forward their names to the editor.<sup>39</sup>

These Acts of Goodwill antedated the N-1 Program of the Methodist Church by a century.

### **The Reaction of the 1866 General Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church South**

In April, 1866, the General Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church met in the Corondelet Church, New Orleans, Louisiana. This denomination had only been in re-possession of this church for five months. The memory of the dispossession was fresh in the minds of the delegates. The written reaction, however, is very interesting.

In the pastoral letter of the bishops, they wrote:

While the attempt to take forcible possession of our property and to disintegrate our church, declare the mind that would destroy us, let it be ours to show the mind that was in Christ.<sup>40</sup>

On April 11, 1866, the General Conference adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That two or more of our bishops be requested to wait upon the President of the United States and tender him appropriate expressions of gratitude for the restora-

tion of our church property, and to further assure him that we, as a body of ministers of Christ, enjoin our congregations in submission to the Power and that, while we stand aloof from the Party Politics and deprecate any intermeddling of churches or ministers as such, with political affairs, we yet feel it to be our duty cheerfully to comply with the Apostolic Injunction to make supplications, Prayers intercession and Thanksgiving for all men—for all in authority that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives in all Godliness and honesty.<sup>41</sup>

### **Report of The State of The Country**

On December 18, 1866, the Mississippi Mission Conference adopted the Report of the State of the Country. In its report, the following resolution was included :

Resolved, That in view of our relations to the colored people of this country, we repeat to them our instructions of last year ; we counsel the freedmen everywhere throughout the country to banish all erroneous and strange notions instilled in their minds by impracticable men concerning their own destiny and the purposes of the government towards them, we exhort them not to depend upon the bounty of others but upon their own strong hands for support, we enjoin upon them to procure at once, employment for the coming year, to remain in the country where their services are most needed, to observe fidelity in their contracts, to be diligent in business and to lead quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and honesty.<sup>42</sup>

### **Parochial Schools**

By 1866, the Mississippi Mission Conference had begun to realize the importance of trained laity for the church. It authorized the establishment of Parochial schools wherever practicable. The schools were to be established in the churches or under the supervision of the churches.

These schools were to provide the rudiments of education. The minister, wherever it was practicable, should be the

teacher. The teacher-minister concept developed early in the Southwest. It grew out of exigency.

On December 18, 1866, the Mississippi Mission Conference resolved to solicit the support of the Freedmen's Aid Society. It approved the following :

Wherever a society cannot afford to employ a teacher, the presiding elder must communicate the said fact to the Freedmen's Aid Society of the said Board and apply for a teacher or means for one.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Freedmen's Aid Society At Work In The Conference**

Soon after the organization of the Freedmen's Aid Society on August 7, 1866, it began work in the Southwest. During the first year of operation, it established schools in the following towns :

|             |                         |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Alexandria  | New Orleans             |
| Baton Rouge | Thibodeaux              |
| Franklin    | Vicksburg <sup>44</sup> |

The following factors influenced the selection of the towns :

- (a) Center of influence
- (b) Towns where the freedmen were most cooperative
- (c) Liberal support from the freedmen
- (d) Towns in which the largest number of ignorant Negroes lived.
- (e) Towns in which the missionaries were already at work.

### **The 1866 Session Ends With The Lord's Supper**

On December 19, 1866, the second session of the Mississippi Mission Conference closed with the Lord's Supper. As they communed together, they were reminded that Christ died for them. They were enjoined to live dangerously for Christ.

### **The Texas Mission Conference**

After Bishop Simpson had closed the Mississippi Mission

Conference, his next responsibility was to organize the Texas Mission Conference.

It was organized in Houston, Texas on January 3, 1867. The following men were transferred to this conference:

Joseph Welsh  
Samuel Osborne  
David (Elias) Dibble  
J. Davis  
G. E. Brooks

All were transferred from the Mississippi Mission Conference.

Ten men were admitted on trial. On credentials George W. Honey was received from the Wesleyan Church. The conference was organized with three white ministers, 12 colored preachers and two German preachers.

The Texas Conference organized with Joseph Welsh as its first secretary. It created three districts:

Houston  
Texas Mission  
German Mission

The conference organized with 1,093 full members and 491 probationers. There were twenty-one local preachers. Five congregations had already been organized. Property value was estimated at \$4,850.

With the organization of the Texas Conference, it became the first legal offspring of the Mississippi Mission Conference.

### **The Final Session of the Mississippi Mission Conference**

The third and final session of the Mississippi Mission Conference convened in the Marais Street Church, New Orleans on December 19, 1867. Its presiding officer was Edward Raymond Ames. He was no stranger to the needs, op-

portunities and resources of the Conference. He had served faithfully as a Secretary of the Missionary Department in the Southwest for several years.

### **Conference Elects A Negro Secretary**

Two years earlier, not a single Negro was qualified to serve as secretary. During the conference year, Bishop Simpson had transferred James D. Lynch into the conference. He was appointed as the presiding elder of the South Mississippi District.

James Lynch had the distinct honor to serve as the first secretary. On December 19, 1867, two men were nominated:

J. P. Newman, the incumbent  
James D. Lynch

He was also the first Negro to serve as Presiding Elder in the Southwest. The Delaware and Washington Conferences had colored presiding elders from the very beginning.

By training and experience, Lynch was qualified for the dual task. At 18, he graduated from Union Academy, Meredith, New Hampshire. In addition, he had served as a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In the spring, 1867, Lynch was admitted into the Erie Conference on credentials. On July 16, 1867, Bishop Simpson transferred him to the Mississippi Conference.

### **Conference Reports Progress**

The Conference continued to evidence growth in 1867. By that year, the Conference reported 13,309 full members and 2,855 probationers. One hundred twenty-seven men had been licensed to preach. By now 47 congregations had been organized.

In making his report to the Conference, N. L. Brakeman, Presiding Elder described a visit to Corinth, Mississippi.

Here, as elsewhere, our cause has had to struggle with many opposing influences since its organization, but as in other places, it has not only maintained its existence but made some progress.

Since my last visit, about 20 persons in all have joined the church. The temporary structure in which they worshipped was built jointly by Methodists and Baptists.<sup>45</sup> Friction soon developed over the use of the church. For peace sake, the Methodists sought elsewhere to worship.

### **Ames Church Is Dedicated**

On December 5, 1867, Bishop Ames dedicated the Ames Church. At the time of dedication, it reported 83 full members and three probationers.

In reporting to the Annual Conference, these words were recorded in the Conference Journal:

The erection and completion of the Ames Methodist Episcopal Church in New Orleans marked an era in the progress of our cause in the Mississippi Mission Conference. It is said to have cost \$50,000 and will accommodate a thousand hearers. It will be a stronghold for our cause in the Southwest.<sup>46</sup>

The Missionary Society of the Church contributed \$30,000 to the cost of Ames Church. In addition, the Church Extension donated \$10,000.<sup>47</sup>

### **The First Contribution To Missions**

The Mississippi Mission Conference began this year, 1867, to contribute to the Mission Program of the Church in the amount of \$76.70.

### **The Growth of Parochial Schools**

The Parochial schools had been in operation for one year. In 1867, there were 12 day schools with twenty-three teach-

ers. The total enrollment of the school was 1510. These schools were located in Louisiana.

### **Conference Admits Its First Class of Men of Color Into Full Conference Membership**

On December 19, 1867, nine Negroes were admitted into full membership. The following men were recipients of this honor :

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Scott Chinn      | James M. Bryant |
| Emperor Williams | Thomas Kennedy  |
| Anthony Ross     | Samuel Small    |
| William Murrell  | Hardy Ryan      |
|                  | Henry Green     |

By now the Conference had six white and ten colored preachers in full membership.

### **The First Election of Delegates to The General Conference**

On Friday, December 20, 1867, the conference established an Order of the Day. It was for the election of a delegate to the 1868 General Conference. On motion of A. C. McDonald, the election was to be by ballot.

The question of eligibility was raised. Bishop Ames ruled that it was necessary for an elder to have travelled four full years in the Methodist Episcopal Church to qualify.

The ruling limited the choice among :

A. C. McDonald  
J. P. Newman  
N. L. Brakeman

The Reverend J. P. Newman received 11 votes and was elected. The Reverend A. Ross, a colored minister, had been elected as an elder and received into full connection on the day before. He was chosen as the alternate delegate.

### **The Mississippi Mission Conference Seeks Conciliation**

The Conference sought to become an instrument of peace and goodwill in the Southwest. The moving spirit behind the effort was James D. Lynch. On Tuesday, December 24, 1867, he presented the following resolution :

Whereas, the portion of our country embraced within the bounds of this conference is practically disorganized and threatened with anarchy, Resolved, That we call upon the General government to see to it that the inalienable rights proclaimed and established by our fathers, and engrafted by them in the Constitution of the United States, and reasserted by the nation upon the battlefield and at the ballot box, be guaranteed to all and that our citizens of every color and clime be protected in their persons, property, business, his liberty and religion.<sup>48</sup>

The resolution was adopted unanimously by the Conference.

### **The Conference Adopts An Open Door Policy**

The conference was organized primarily for colored preachers. It was not to be a closed society. In 1867, the conference expressed its sentiment in adopting the following resolution presented by A. C. McDonald :

Resolved, That the Mississippi Mission Conference has been organized on the great principles of equal rights, the common brotherhood of man, the oneness of believers in Christ, and the perfect equality of all men before the Altar of God and that recognizing as we do the odiousness of all distinctions based on caste, we declare as the established principles of this conference that we are and will remain unalterably opposed to all distinctions made in the House of God on account of race and color.<sup>49</sup>

The resolution was approved overwhelmingly. It indicated in crystal clear language that the Mississippi Mission Conference approved an inclusive fellowship on all levels at its

beginning. It served also as another effort to heal the estranged relations between the churches in the southwest.

### **A Conference With Bishop Robert Paine**

Another significant action was taken by the Mississippi Mission Conference in healing the wound between the daughters of Methodism. A Conference was proposed with Bishop Robert Paine, Senior Bishop of The Methodist Episcopal Church South. The Senior Bishop resided in Aberdeen, Mississippi. The presiding elder, N. L. Brakeman of the Holly Springs District consented to confer with Bishop Paine.

The following statements are excerpts from that Conference:

I found him laboring under some mis-apprehensions of our principles, purpose, and spirit in the work, and I set him right by a few explanations and reading to him the fourth and fifth resolutions of the Report of the State of the Country adopted by the Conference in New Orleans containing our advice as a Conference to freedmen and Bishop Thomson's instruction to our missionaries.

In reply to the statement, the venerable bishop said:

That is well. No sensible man can object to these resolutions. They contain good advice. If that is the advice you gave to the freedmen and if your ministers carry out those instructions, you will do good in the South and no good man will undertake to hinder you.<sup>50</sup>

This dialogue began the thawing of the social iceberg in Mississippi.

### **An Orphan Home Started**

The need for an orphan home for the many destitute children was urgent. Through the kindness of Dr. and Mrs. J. P.

Newman, a plantation of 1700 acres was purchased at Lake Teche for this purpose. The Conference approved the idea in 1866. It was chartered as the Orphan's Home Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Its purpose was to provide a home for orphans without regard for race, color or sect. The conference elected the following as managers :

H. G. Jackson  
J. P. Newman  
James Johnson  
Madame Louise De Mortie  
Mrs. Henry Green  
Mrs. L. M. Richardson  
Mrs. L. B. Whitmore  
Mrs. W. B. Armstrong

The Board of Managers was interracial.

The Orphan Home was opened officially in 1867. The first matron was Mrs. S. S. Watson. The home opened with 100 boys and girls.

### **The Closing Hour of the Mississippi Mission Conference**

On Christmas Eve, 1867, the Mississippi Mission Conference closed *sine die*. It was the last session of the Mission Conference.

Before reading the appointments for 1868, Bishop Edward Raymond Ames admonished the preachers in these words:

Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves,  
Be sons of consolation,  
Messenger of mercy,  
Preachers of peace.  
Be courageous—meet difficulty and danger with  
firmness . . .  
In the face of every foe, say,  
By God's grace, I will conquer.

Remember the great Commission:  
 Go—no conditions stated but a command given—‘Go!’  
 Go everywhere, and as you go, preach—  
 Preach the Gospel to every Creature but remember  
 The blessed promise  
 ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of  
 the world.’

After the reading of the appointments, the Conference sang  
 as the closing song, Hymn 221 :

And let our bodies part—  
 To different clime, repair;  
 Inseparably joined in heart  
 The friends of Jesus are.

O let us still proceed  
 In Jesus’ work below  
 And, following our triumphant Head  
 To further conquests go.

The vineyard of the Lord  
 Before His laborers lie  
 And lo! We see the vast reward  
 Which waits us in the skies.

This hymn was appropriate for the occasion. It became the  
 hymn that was usually sung in the closing hour of the conference.

### **The General Conference, 1868**

When the General Conference convened in the First Methodist Church, Chicago, Illinois in 1868, it was faced with several decisions regarding the Mission Conferences. The Mission Conferences had chosen delegates for this conference. The seating of these delegates had to be decided.

In 1864, the General Conference enacted legislation depriving the Mission Conferences of the right to elect delegates. In fact, the following privileges were denied the Mission Conferences :

- (1) They could not send delegates to the General Conference;
- (2) They could not draw dividends from the Book Concern and the Chartered Fund;
- (3) They could not vote upon constitutional amendments.

The 1868 General Conference faced a dilemma. Either it had to reaffirm its decisions of the previous General Conference or modify them. In order to modify these decisions, it was necessary to do the following :

- (1) To rescind portions of its 1864 legislation;
- (2) Mission Conferences had to be given the status of Annual Conferences;
- (3) The Provisional delegates had to be seated at this conference.

For ten days, the issue was debated. On May 11, 1868, the animated debate was brought to a close by the adoption of the following resolution :

Resolved I, That all actions of the General Conference of 1864 restricting or purporting to restrict the rights and privileges of the Annual Conferences which the Bishops were authorized by the said General Conference to form within the United States and territories be at the same time hereby repealed;

Resolved II, That the following Conferences, namely :

|             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| Alabama     | South Carolina |
| Delaware    | Tennessee      |
| Georgia     | Texas          |
| Holston     | Virginia       |
| Mississippi | North Carolina |
| Washington  |                |

are declared to be Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America and vested with all the rights, privileges and immunities usual to Annual Conferences of the said church;

Resolved III, That the provisional delegates to this body elected by the aforesaid conferences severally and individually are hereby admitted to membership in this General Conference on the presentation of the required credentials.<sup>51</sup>

This resolution was adopted by 212 in favor and 14 opposed. On May 12, 1868, J. P. Newman was certified as the delegate from the Mississippi Conference and was therefore seated as a voting member of the conference.

### **Other Significant Actions of the 1868 General Conference**

In 1864, the General Conference had authorized the bishops to establish the boundaries of the conference organized until the next General Conference.

The Committee on Boundary recommended that the boundary of the Louisiana Conference would include all the State of Louisiana; the Mississippi Conference would include all the State of Mississippi. The Texas Conference was already organized. It was to embrace the entire State of Texas. This report was approved by the General Conference of 1868.

The General Conference voted permissive legislation regarding the division of conferences. Authority was granted to bishops to divide conferences which had already been formed in the South contingent upon a favorable vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Due consideration was given to the shortage of trained ministerial manpower in the South. It approved a liberal system of transfer. The 1864 General Conference had established a three year tenure for pastors to remain in the same parish. It was amended in the 1868 General Conference not to apply to missionaries to our people and presiding elders.<sup>52</sup>

**J. P. Newman, Mississippi Delegate,  
Makes His Maiden Speech**

On May 18, 1868, J. P. Newman presented the following resolution to the General Conference:

Resolved I, That the Committee on the Book Concern be instructed to inquire into the expediency of establishing a Depository in New Orleans;

Resolved II, That the Committee on Book Concern be instructed to inquire into the propriety of adopting the New Orleans Advocate as an official organ;

Resolved III, That a Committee of seven be appointed on the conditions and wants of our work in the South.<sup>53</sup>

The General Conference referred this resolution to the Committee on Book Concern and the State of the Church for consideration.

**Report of The Book Committee**

On May 28, 1868, the General Conference adopted the Report of the Book Committee. It authorized the Book Agents at Cincinnati to publish the New Orleans Advocate at New Orleans and that the editor would be appointed by the bishops with the concurrence of the Book Agents aforesaid mentioned with the understanding that the Agents were at liberty to discontinue the said paper in the event that its continued publication would involve a greater loss to the Concern than \$2,000 per annum.

The New Orleans Advocate became an official organ of the church. It was started in 1865. It was approved by the first session of the Mississippi Mission Conference on December 27, 1865. It was designed to give enlightenment to the constituency of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Its first editor was J. P. Newman.

### **The General Conference Frowns Upon The Election of Bishops for Special Groups**

Several resolutions were introduced in the General Conference regarding the election of bishops for special groups. In the main these resolutions referred to Mission Conferences outside the United States. They were germane to the Negro Conferences within the United States.

On May 21, 1868, the Committee on Episcopacy recommended to the General Conference, the following resolutions:

Resolved I, That we deem it not expedient to recommend the election of any man to the episcopal office who shall not be clothed with the full powers of the episcopacy of our church and eligible to preside in any and all annual conferences; Resolved II, That we see no good reason for any special class of our population.<sup>54</sup>

This resolution was approved by the General Conference. In its approval, the General Conference was disapproving of diocesan bishops.

### **A Resolution Met Death**

On May 18, 1868, J. P. Newman, Mississippi delegate, presented a resolution against colored conferences. The resolution originated on the Jackson District with James Lynch as presiding elder. It was endorsed by the ministers and 111 laymen of the district.

In commenting upon the resolution, the *Christian Advocate*, May 28, 1868, page 170, reported:

A memorial from the Mississippi Conference protesting against any distinctions on account of color was presented and read and appropriately referred.

It was referred to the Committee on Boundary. The Committee on Boundary placed it on the non-concurrent calendar.

### **Biographical Sketches of the First Negro Pioneer Preachers In The Mississippi Mission Conference**

In 1865 eleven Negro preachers were admitted on trial in the Mississippi Mission Conference. These ministers could date the beginning of their itinerant ministry with the second Christmas Conference.

The following pages will record some salient facts about these Circuit Riders. Their background, training, and accomplishments will be emphasized.

#### **JAMES MADISON BRYANT**

James Madison Bryant was born a slave in Newbern, North Carolina on June 1, 1817.<sup>55</sup> During his early childhood, his family moved to Tennessee. He was sold to a wealthy planter, Colonel W. W. Pugh on Bayou La fourche in Louisiana. He was the favorite of the slaves. Hence he was given limited educational advantages. He received his early training from an episcopalian. During his youth he attended the Episcopal Church. Later, he discovered that the Methodist Episcopal Church better suited his needs. He joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Soon afterwards, he was licensed to preach.

By chance, he came to New Orleans to attend the Christmas Conference. He was admitted on trial at this Conference. He was appointed by Bishop Thomson to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Here, he organized the first Methodist Episcopal Church for Negroes. The first church was erected under his administration. His second appointment was St. Martinville on Bayou Teche. He remained on this charge for three years. On this charge as well, he demonstrated his building genius. He built his second church and organized three other congregations. His next appointment was the Sixth Street Church in New Orleans. Here, he only stayed for two years because of failing health.

Health failure necessitated his acceptance of an appointment near his home. He was assigned to the St. James Church. Soon thereafter, he suffered a hemorrhage of the lungs.

On September 27, 1876, his last quarterly conference was held in his parsonage. Toward the end, he admonished his son :

Cornelius, go down to St. James and wind up all the business, and get all my reports ready for Conference.

His son completed the year's work. During this period, he felt the Call to Preach.

On January 2, 1876, James M. Bryant died at Donalds-ville, Louisiana. He was still in the effective relationship.

### SCOTT CHINN

In 1802, there was born in Lexington, Kentucky, a potential pioneer preacher named Scott Chinn.<sup>56</sup> He was born under the galling yoke of slavery; however, he managed to learn to read. At fifteen he answered the Call to the Ministry. At twenty, he was married.

In 1825, he and his wife were sold to a family in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1849, Scott and his wife became the property of Judge Robinson of New Orleans.

At the age of 63, he joined the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865. Although he was close to retirement, he served creditably the following appointments :

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Marais Street   | 1865-66 |
| La Harpe        | 1867-70 |
| First Street    | 1871    |
| Simpson         | 1872-73 |
| La Harpe        | 1874    |
| Thompson Chapel | 1875-76 |

In 1877, he retired, but he continued to work faithfully at Marais Street Church. By that date, the name of the church was Union Chapel.

On Saturday, June 17, 1882, he died in New Orleans. He had reached the ripe age of eighty.

### DAVID (ELIAS) DIBBLE

Little information is available on David (Elias) Dibble. He was admitted on trial in the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865. His first appointment was Houston, Texas. On January 3, 1867, he was transferred to the Texas Mission Conference.<sup>57</sup> He was the founder of the Trinity Methodist Church in Houston. His last appointment was Lynchburgh. He retired in 1874 and died in 1886.

### HENRY GREEN

The early life of Henry Green is also obscure. He was born around 1800 in the State of Maryland. He was converted during his childhood.

By his own industry and frugality, he purchased his own freedom before the Civil War. He felt it was his social responsibility to lend assistance to others in securing their freedom. He bought several slaves for cash which he had saved through his frugal methods. He permitted the freedmen to repay him in monthly or weekly payments until the full mortgage had been satisfied.

In 1865, he joined the Mississippi Mission Conference. His first appointment was First Street Church, New Orleans. He served faithfully for several years. Later his eyesight failed. He was forced to retire. On March 10, 1888, he died.<sup>58</sup> He was buried in Washington Cemetery, No. 2.

### THOMAS KENNEDY

Under the shadow of the National Capitol was born Thomas Kennedy. He was born at Alexandria, Virginia in

1818. Like most of the pioneer preachers, he was born a slave. He, too, was converted early to the Christian faith. During his early teens, he was licensed to preach. He united with the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865. His first appointment was Franklin and New Iberia. He served in the effective relationship for 18 years. On November 1, 1883, he died. At the time of death, he was serving the La Harpe Street Church in New Orleans.<sup>59</sup>

### WILLIAM MURRELL

Another pioneer preacher was born in Georgetown, South Carolina.<sup>60</sup> He was named William Murrell. After the death of his father, he was sold to a man named Toby in Alabama. This owner transferred his ownership of William, to his son, young Toby. The young Toby lost Murrell through gambling. He fell in the receivership of Mr. Williams. He, in turn, sold him to one Mr. Stowe in New Orleans. The last named conveyed him to Mr. Walridge, a minister. Only then was Murrell treated with kindness. He was converted early. He began to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1865, he united with the Mississippi Mission Conference. His first appointment was Thibodeaux, Louisiana. Here he recruited a large membership. He served also the following appointments: Houma, Napoleonville, and Pineville, Louisiana.

In 1868, Murrell was elected to the Constitutional Convention from La fourche Parish. He served several times in the State Legislature. He died suddenly on Sunday, February 7, 1892 at Carrollton.

### SAMUEL OSBORNE

Very little is known of the early life of Samuel Osborne. He was born in North Carolina in 1825.<sup>61</sup> He was admit-

ted on trial in the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865. His first appointment was Galveston, Texas. In 1867, he was transferred to the Texas Mission Conference by Bishop Simpson. On January 3, 1868, he was admitted into full membership. In 1869, he returned to the Louisiana Conference and spent the remainder of his ministry in that conference. He served the following charges:

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Vermillionville | Thibodeaux |
| Franklin        | Monroe     |
| Shreveport      | Clinton    |
| St. Paul        | New Roads  |
| The Plains      |            |

In 1881, he was placed on the supernumerary relations. The following year, he retired. In March, 1890, he died. His dying testimony was: "Tell my brethren: I have cut my way through. Death is doing his work on this frame but I am dying a pure man of God."

### ANTHONY ROSS

On Christmas Day, 1805, Anthony was the Christmas present for Ben and Rebecca Ross. He was the second of sixteen children. He was born at Rick Neck, Maryland.<sup>62</sup>

At the age of twenty-seven, he was kidnapped by a Negro trader named Woodfork and carried to New Orleans. In the same year, he united with the Methodist Church. Shortly afterwards, he was licensed to preach.

In 1865, he was admitted into the Mississippi Mission Conference. He served faithfully the following charges:

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Wesley      | Pleasant Plains |
| St. Matthew | Thompson Chapel |

He retired in 1884.

On April 14, 1892, he died. This octogenarian had won the respect of many white and colored people. One of his in-

timate friends was Bishop J. P. Newman. At the time of his death, Bishop Newman was attending the General Conference at Omaha, Nebraska. He wired the following message:

General Conference work detains me. My old friend and brother has gone to heaven. Place a flower on his coffin for John P. Newman.<sup>63</sup>

### HARDY RYAN

The pioneer preacher who has the distinct honor of being the first missionary from the Conference was Hardy Ryan. He was admitted in the Conference on trial in 1865. His first appointment was at Baton Rouge. His next appointment was on the Mississippi District at Columbus, Mississippi. In speaking of his work at Columbus, the following comment was made:

Reverend Hardy Ryan, an enterprising, working, push-ahead Methodist preacher is pastor in Columbus, Mississippi. He has a good church and congregation. Columbus is one of the first cities in the state and settled principally by what were wealthy planters. There are 349 members and probationers, 4 local preachers, 4 exhorters, and church valued at \$2,000; one Sunday School; six officers and teachers; 110 scholars. Thirty dollars have been collected for church purposes.

He went to Liberia as a missionary in 1869. He died in Liberia in 1877.<sup>64</sup>

### SAMUEL SMALL

About 1803, Samuel Small was born in Maryland.<sup>65</sup> He was also a slave. At the age of 24, he was converted. In 1836, he was brought to New Orleans. In 1850, he was licensed to preach under a permit by the Reverend N. H. McTyeire, later a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church South,

In 1865, he joined the Mississippi Mission Conference. Among the charges he served were Alexandria, Louisiana, First Street, and Baton Rouge. He died on October 12, 1873 at Feliciana, Louisiana.

### EMPEROR WILLIAMS

The last of the pioneer preachers to leave the scene of action was Emperor Williams. He was born in Nashville, Tennessee, about 1822. His father was Seth Green, one of the five men that met death on the scaffold at Harper's Ferry with John Brown, the Apostle of Freedom.

He was brought to New Orleans when a boy. He served at the brick layer's trade with his master until he was freed.

He was admitted in the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865. His first appointment was Jefferson and Carrollton. He was serving these churches when the riot occurred in 1866.

He was one of the outstanding leaders among the pioneer group.

He stood as a mighty breakwater between the impetuosity of youth and the exclusive conservatism that sought to antagonize each other.

To him belongs the proud distinction of having been the first colored man appointed as presiding elder in the Louisiana Conference. He served for almost twenty years in this capacity. In 1880, he was elected as General Conference delegate. Two years earlier, he was the fraternal delegate to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference.

On August 25, 1896, this venerable servant of God was translated. At his death, the Mississippi Mission Conference lost the last of the Pioneer Preachers.

### **The Missionaries Leave the Southwest**

After the missionaries spent several arduous years under the "Lend Lease System" from the Northern Conferences, they left the Southwest.

The first to leave was the Reverend Henry Jackson. His stay was cut short because of a wound received in the New Orleans Riot in 1866. He returned to his native state to recuperate. After he had recovered, he accepted a pastoral charge of an English speaking congregation in Buenos Aires, South America.

On March 3, 1869, J. P. Newman transferred to the Baltimore Conference. He was assigned to the newly organized Metropolitan Church in Washington D. C.<sup>66</sup> This church became a Connectional Church on June 2, 1868. Because of its significance for the denomination as a whole, the General Conference authorized that a collection would be taken by each congregation on Independence Sunday, July 5, 1868 for the completion of the church.<sup>67</sup> The value of the church edifice was estimated at \$170,000.<sup>68</sup>

In the same year, W. M. Henry transferred to the New York Conference. He was assigned to the Riverdale Charge. N. L. Brakeman transferred to Northwest Indiana Conference and was appointed to the Fifth Street Church in Fayetteville, Indiana. In 1870, Joseph Welsh returned to the Philadelphia Conference. He was assigned to Easton on the North Philadelphia District. The last of the original missionaries to leave the Southwest was R. D. Diossey. He transferred to the New York East Conference in 1874. He was appointed to Middle Village on the Long Island North District. By 1875, all the original missionaries had retired from the Southwest.

## CHAPTER II

# THE MISSISSIPPI CONFERENCE BECOMES OF AGE (1869 - 1879)

CANTON, MISSISSIPPI is the birthplace of the Mississippi Conference. On January 7, 1869, the first session of the Mississippi Conference convened in Asbury Methodist Church. Its president was Bishop Matthew Simpson. He was detained for a day because of illness in his family.

It was, indeed, a history-making occasion. It was opened by James Lynch, a Negro, and the presiding elder of the Jackson District.<sup>1</sup> He was elected as temporary chairman. The conference elected A. C. McDonald, a white minister and first president of Shaw University, as its secretary. It was the first session since the General Conference granted it the status of an Annual Conference. It was the first Annual Conference held in 1869.

The Conference organized with only two districts—Holly Springs and Jackson. It began with only two elders in the conference—James Lynch and A. C. McDonald. At this conference, six men were admitted into full connection. Twenty men were admitted on trial.

The conference began with 8,732 full members and 2,219 probationers. Twenty-six congregations were already organized.

### The Mississippi Conference Sends Forth Its First Missionary

The Mississippi Conference was the product of the missionary passion of concerned churchmen. It evidenced the reflex effect by sending one of its members to the mission field.

Hardy Ryan was sent to Liberia as a missionary. He left the St. James Church at Columbus, Mississippi. On arrival in Liberia, he was appointed to the Heddington Mission. Later he served Robertsville and Crozierville. His last appointment was Millsburgh and White Plains on the St. Paul's River District.<sup>2</sup> He died in 1877. This tribute was paid to him :

Hardy Ryan was a deeply pious man and a faithful Methodist preacher.

### **The Mississippi Conference Makes Its Social Witness**

Since 1850, the Methodist Episcopal Church has waged a battle against liquor. The Mississippi Conference recognized its menacing effects upon its church members. The conference, therefore, resolved to "use its best endeavors to banish from the social circles and the festive boards, all use of beverages of every sort of intoxicating liquor."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Founding of Shaw University**

In 1867, Shaw University was begun in Asbury Church, located on Gholson Street at that time.<sup>4</sup> It was one of the first schools organized by the Freedmen's Aid Society.

Soon after, a tract of land amounting to 85 acres was purchased. The first building was erected at an estimated cost of \$10,000. The Negroes of Mississippi subscribed \$2,000 toward the erection of this first building.

The school was named Shaw University in honor of S. O. Shaw, donor. He contributed \$10,000 toward the building program.

On May 26, 1870, the institution was chartered as Shaw University by Mississippi legislature. In 1891, the name was changed to Rust University. There was another school in North Carolina by the same name. The new name was in

honor of Richard S. Rust, the Secretary of Freedman's Aid Society and is located in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

The first President of Shaw University was A. C. McDonald. He served as president from 1870 to 1875.

Shaw University had operated for several years before it produced a college graduate. On May 30, 1878, R. Quincy Adams, was the first graduate.<sup>5</sup> In 1881, the following persons graduated from the college:

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| R. Royster Greene        | Milton M. Avant             |
| Henry Avant              | Wm. H. Strickland           |
| Mrs. Annie L. Strickland | John H. Brooks <sup>6</sup> |

From the very beginning, Shaw University was dedicated to the training of ministers. In appreciation, the Mississippi Conference approved Shaw University in 1869.

In 1872, the president made the following report:

Our theological class is especially promising and should receive additional encouragement from the church. Experience has demonstrated the urgent necessity of a trained ministry for the colored people. Our students, young as they are, are sought for far and near to preach on Sundays. Some of them go regularly from sixteen to twenty-five and even thirty miles to minister to congregations on the Sabbath. Will not the church see the exigency that presses upon us, and aid us in furnishing a trained ministry for this people? Our theological students are poor. Some of them sadly pressed by poverty and need help.<sup>7</sup>

In 1872, there were 27 men enrolled in a pre-theological course at Shaw University.

Shaw University (Rust College) has provided pre-seminary training for many men for the ministry.

Among its first graduates to enter the Christian ministry were:

M. W. Dogan (1886)  
L. W. Price (1894)

N. H. Williams (1884)  
William Bradley (1884)  
Griffin G. Logan (1893)  
S. A. Cowan (1884)

In 1873, the Mississippi Conference voted to raise one dollar per member to be applied to the endowment of a professorship in theology.

### **The Methodist Episcopal Church Lacks Appeal to the Southern Whites**

The southern whites were still not uniting with the Methodist Episcopal Church in representative numbers in the second decade. There was only one white church on the Holly Springs District in 1869.

There were many reasons for the lack of appeal to the southern whites. Bishop Simpson enumerated three reasons:

- (1) No state in the Union was more thoroughly committed to secession than Mississippi;
- (2) Our first ministers were first invited by the colored population who longed to be embraced again in the arms of the Old Mother Church;
- (3) A great prejudice existed. All northern ministers or teachers are, in some way, connected with emancipation and they were unwilling to associate with or be members of a church which, in their estimation, stooped so low as to educate and elevate the colored race.<sup>8</sup>

### **Blessed Memories of the Founder**

In 1871, the Mississippi Conference paid tribute to its founder. Bishop Edward Thomson died on March 22, 1870. In his passing, the Methodist Episcopal Church lost a dynamic leader and the conference lost its founder. The following tribute was paid to him:

In living, he was honored and beloved by all who knew him; in dying he is embalmed in the memory and affection of the church.

On May 12, 1870, the *Christian Advocate* recorded this expression:

The Christian denomination whose service and institutions he loved so well and that conferred on him the highest honor known to its illustrious history will enshrine his memory in the regards that are only due to the character that is beautiful in its transparency and immortal in its elements . . . He was a radical in his convictions, in his sympathies, in his words and in his acts.<sup>9</sup>

He died of pneumonia in Wheeling, West Virginia—He was “Chrysostom of Methodism.” When the Conference records the list of its greatest benefactors, the name of Edward Thomson must be included on the shortest list.

### **The Mississippi Conference Elects Its First Negro Delegate to the General Conference**

When the General Conference convened in Brooklyn, New York in 1872, it included several men of color among the delegation. The 1872 Annual session of the Mississippi Conference elected a bi-racial team. The team was composed of A. C. McDonald, the President of Shaw University and James Lynch, presiding elder of the Jackson District. This was the first time that a Negro qualified under the ruling of Bishop Ames in 1867. Moses Adams served from May 1 to May 23. He was seated due to the absence of Lynch.

Although James Lynch did not get to the General Conference until May 24, 1872, the General Conference knew he was there when he did arrive. He was very vocal on the floor. He will be remembered most for his passionate plea for a man of African descent to be elected bishop providing one could be found who qualified. His plea did not go by default.

Although the General Conference did not consent to elect a Negro, it did approve of the following resolution:

There is nothing in race, color, or former condition that is a bar to an election to the episcopacy the true course being for us to elect only such persons as are by their preeminent piety, endowments, culture, general fitness and acceptability best qualified to fill the office . . . Being of African descent does not prevent membership with men in Annual Conferences nor ordination at the same altars, nor appointment or eligibility to the highest office of the church.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Church Extension Society at Work in Mississippi**

On March 13, 1865, the Church Extension Department became incorporated in Pennsylvania. It was twenty-seven days before the Confederacy laid down arms in the South. The church was now organized to assist in building churches for the freedmen.

In 1869, the Church Extension Department made the following donations to churches in the Mississippi Conference:<sup>11</sup>

|         |          |
|---------|----------|
| Clinton | \$200.00 |
| Forest  | 75.00    |
| Brandon | 100.00   |

On March 18, 1869, the Mt. Pisgah Church, Okolona, Mississippi was granted the first loan in the Conference. The loan amounted to \$300.00. This loan was made from the Monroe Fund. This was a memorial fund established in memory of Dr. S. G. Monroe, first corresponding secretary of Church Extension. He died in February, 1867. The memorial fund was established as a loan fund without interest in the amount of \$50,000.

The donations and loans assisted the conference in building new churches. In addition, the conference introduced "Labor Gifts." Persons who had special skills as carpenters, brick masons, etc., contributed of their time and skills toward the erection of the new churches.

### The Conference Contributes to Missions

The Conference began while it was yet a Mission Conference to contribute to Missions. The following records the statistics :

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Members</i> | <i>Amount</i> | <i>Per Capita</i> |
|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1867        | 6,568          | \$ 76         | 1.9               |
| 1868        | 13,309         | 186           | 1.4               |
| 1869        | 8,732          | 221           | 2.5               |
| 1870        | 15,211         | 253           | 1.6               |

### The First Memorial Service

Since 1777, it has been customary for Annual Conferences to have memorial services for its dead. In that year, the Conference met at Bristol, England. Wesley inquired : "Who have died this year?" The answer came : "John Slocomb at Cones, an old labourer, worn out in the service." <sup>12</sup>

From 1865 to 1872, the answer to the question had been "None." The 1873 Annual Conference convened in St. James Church, Columbus, Mississippi on January 22, 1873. The answer was different. For the first time, death had invaded the ranks of the Conference. The first name to be inscribed upon "The Honored Roll of the Dead," was James D. Lynch. He died on December 18, 1872 at Jackson, Mississippi.

He was born in Baltimore, Maryland on January 8, 1839.<sup>13</sup> His father was free ; his mother was a slave. After his parents exchanged marriage vows, his father purchased the freedom of his newly wed. He was engaged in mercantile pursuits.

Young Lynch had some advantages over other Negro boys of his day. He had the opportunity to attend school. His first teacher was Daniel Alexander Payne, a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The tutelage of this astute leader prepared him for matriculation in Union Academy at Meredith, New Hampshire. At 18, he graduated

from this institution. His plans were to continue his training at Dartmouth College. Because of the failure of his father's business, he was forced to teach. He taught at Jamaica, Long Island for a short period. Soon he heeded the call to preach. He began his ministry in the Presbyterian Church under the pastorate of the Reverend Amos N. Freeman. He soon became dissatisfied with this denomination. He next united with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was admitted into the Indiana Conference by Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, his first tutor. He was appointed to Galena, Illinois. In 1860, he was assigned to Georgetown, D. C. Two years later, he was transferred to the Walters Chapel Church, Baltimore, Maryland. During his pastorate here, he became engaged and married Miss Eugenia Rice.

On May 17, 1863, Lynch preached his farewell sermon at the Sullivan African Methodist Episcopal Church, New York. He became a missionary to South Carolina under the auspices of the American Freedmen's Association. While he served in the South, he organized several societies in connection with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was also the commissioner of Freedmen's affairs under General Saxton. In addition, he served as Chaplain to the 1st South Carolina Regiment for colored soldiers. He is credited with organizing the first African Methodist Church at Savannah, Georgia. According to Farish, it was the first congregation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Deep South.

While Lynch was in Savannah, he was privileged to participate in an interview at the headquarters of Major General Sherman in Savannah on January 12, 1865. Twenty Negro ministers and other church officials attended the meeting. The question under consideration was the condition of the colored people in the rebel states. The question was discussed

regarding segregation. With the exception of James Lynch, all Negroes preferred voluntary segregation. They argued as long as prejudice existed in the South, voluntary segregation would be preferable. Lynch believed that the only way to wipe out prejudice would be to have social interaction. Lynch was the only Negro from the North.

From February 24, 1866 to June 15, 1867, Lynch served as the editor of the *Christian Recorder*, the official organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. On June 5, 1867, he severed his relationship with this Church. On that day, he was admitted into the Erie Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Credentials. At the close of this conference, he was transferred by Bishop Matthew Simpson to the Mississippi Mission Conference. He was appointed as the presiding elder of the South Mississippi District. He remained on the district for his short period in the Methodist ministry. He in cooperation with J. J. Spellman, published the *Colored Citizen Monthly*. It was devoted to the interest of the Republican party and The Methodist Church. At the close of the 1872 General Conference, he went to Philadelphia to attend the Republican Convention. He was a delegate from Mississippi and was very active in the convention.

He was also active in state politics. He served as secretary of the State during the carpetbag administration. He became "Mr. Republican" among the Negroes.

Above all, Lynch was an instrument for peace and goodwill in the South. On one occasion, he said: "The colored people are as anxious as any people in our broad land to see political passions subside . . . We desire to live in peace with our exmasters—we recognize the mutual dependence of the one on the other; and to open a breach between the races is repugnant to every feeling of our natures." <sup>14</sup> In appreciation for his services in this field, the Mississippi Confer-

ence approved of a monument for him on January 27, 1873. In addition to the contributions from the Conference and interested friends, the Mississippi legislature authorized an appropriation for the monument. It is a singular fact that he was the only man to whose memory a monument had been erected by a legislative appropriation up to 1900.<sup>15</sup>

The following comments have been made about Lynch:

He was a great orator; fluent and graceful, he stirred his great audiences as no other man did or could do. He was the idol of the Negroes, who would come from every point of the compass and for miles to hear him speak. He rarely spoke to less than a thousand and often two to five thousand.<sup>16</sup>

Lynch was buried on December 20, 1872 in the cemetery in Jackson, now known as Greenwood Cemetery.

### **Methodists in Political Offices**

During the Reconstruction Period, many Negroes were elected to political offices on both the state and national level. A few were Methodists. The following men served in the Mississippi legislature in 1870 and 1871:

Edmund Scarborough, Holmes County  
A. K. Davis, Noxubee County  
Perry Howard, Holmes County

Hiram Revels served in the United States Senate. In speaking of them, the Mississippi newspapers reported that they acquitted themselves as legislators. The newspaper stated further: "They have shown consideration for the feelings of the whites."

### **The Mississippi Conference Supports The Southwestern Advocate**

In 1872, the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* was established at New Orleans, Louisiana. It was to be the official organ among the Negroes.

On January 27, 1873, the Mississippi Conference pledged to secure one thousand subscribers to the paper during the year. Each pastor was authorized to become an agent for the church periodical.<sup>17</sup>

### **The First Martyr in the Conference**

In July, 1866, Henry Jackson, a white missionary from Indiana was severely wounded in the New Orleans Riot. He did not suffer martyrdom. In November, 1875, however, Oscar Carter was assassinated in Scott County. The reason for his assassination was one of the unresolved cases in Mississippi's history. He was the first Mississippi circuit rider to be killed.

The Reverend Carter was born in Tennessee. He was a slave. He entered the United States Army and served for two years. After an honorable discharge, he lived in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Here, he joined the Methodist Church. Soon after, he received exhorter's license, and later local license.

On December 22, 1871, he was admitted on trial in the Conference. In 1872, he was ordained a deacon. On January 24, 1874, he was admitted into full connection. His first appointment was Forest and Morton. He was in his third year when the assassin's bullet pierced his heart.

### **The Conference of 1875**

The Mississippi Conference convened in the St. Paul Church, Meridian, Mississippi on January 20, 1875 with Bishop Randolph S. Foster as President. For the first time, the Conference opened with singing: "And are we yet alive?" In the Wesleyan tradition, these circuit riders sang this hymn lustily. It had real meaning for them. Death had now begun to invade their ranks.

The Conference had now been in continued existence for

a decade. It now felt that it had become of age. It was growing in church membership. It continued to receive new recruits for the Christian ministry. Now the Conference evinced discriminatory judgment in regards to admitting members into its fellowship.

### **The Conference Authorized a Course of Study**

Most remarkable among the 1875 proceedings of the Mississippi Conference was the authorization of a Course of Study for men seeking Conference membership. This fact is a good index of the Conference becoming of age.

The 1864 General Conference voted to amend the *Discipline on behalf of the colored preachers* so that they would be excused from the required examinations in the Course of Study prescribed for (white) candidates for the ministry. In 1844, the General Conference authorized that the bishops would prescribe a Course of Study for all candidates for the itinerant ministry covering a four year period.

On January 20, 1875, the Mississippi Conference voted to request the presiding bishop to prescribe a Course of Study for men entering the Conference.

Acting upon the request of the Conference, Bishop Foster prescribed the following books for the four year period:

- First Year:* Christian Theology  
Samuel Wakefield; Wesley's Christian Perfection
- Second Year:* Porter's Compendium of Methodism;  
Ruther's Church History
- Third Year:* Kidder's Homiletics;  
Hibbard on Baptism
- Fourth Year:* Nast's Introduction;  
Morris' Sermons<sup>18</sup>

These eight books were taken from the Course of Study outlined in the 1872 Discipline for men entering the itiner-

ant ministry. The outline course in the Discipline included twenty or more books.

### **Conference Elects First Lay Delegates To the General Conference**

In 1872, the General Conference authorized Annual Conferences to elect two laymen to the General Conference. The Conference accorded the privilege to James Webb and S. H. Toles.

### **Another Potential Leader Emerges**

The Mississippi Conference was not without a national figure of African descent for long. On January 20, 1875, Hiram Rhodes Revels was admitted in the Conference under the disciplinary rule.<sup>19</sup> He was admitted on credentials from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His training and experience merited for him an early rise to responsible leadership in the Conference.

### **The Conference Approved An Institution For White People**

From the beginning, the Conference showed its unselfish spirit. Its manifestation is evidenced in its vote to establish a school for the culturally deprived white people of Mississippi. On January 22, 1877, H. R. Revels and W. W. Hooper, the President of Shaw University, presented the following resolution to the Conference:

Resolved I, That we regard with favor the preparatory steps to establish the Fowler Institute at Union City, Mississippi;

Resolved II, That when said school shall be established, we extend to it, conference recognition.<sup>20</sup>

The action of the Conference antedated the decision of General Conference by three years. In 1880, the General

Conference authorized the Freedmen's Aid Society to "enlarge its work to include the poor whites but not to the embarrassment of the work among our people of color."

From 1880 to 1884, the society appropriated \$48,901 for whites as compared to \$389,055 for Negroes.

### **Mississippi Conference Contributes To The Freedmen's Aid Society**

The 1872 Discipline enjoined the members in these words:

Let all our people contribute liberally each year for the support of the Freedmen's Aid Society.

Preachers were authorized:

- (1) to present the cause to each congregation;
- (2) to deliver a sermon or address once per year;
- (3) to be diligent in the collection of the apportionment to his charge;
- (4) to report the amount collected to the Annual Conference.

In 1875, the Mississippi Conference reported \$521.10 for the Freedmen's Aid Society. By this amount, the Conference ranked thirty among the 77 conferences. Among Negro Conferences, it ranked number one. Its per capita giving for that year was 19 cents.

### **Ministerial Support Is Prorated**

The 1876 General Conference gave a new interpretation to *Mission Projects*. Thereafter, Mission Projects referred to "New Congregations in the most promising mission fields." It recommended further that appropriations should be made to charges not to exceed five years.

This new legislation made it necessary for the Committee on Missions to re-think its missionary allocations. Prior to 1876, the presiding elders shared in the missionary

appropriations. Out of the \$7,500 missionary appropriations to the Mississippi Conference for 1875, \$3,350 was disbursed toward the ministerial support of the presiding elders.

In 1877, the conference voted that ministerial support for preachers, presiding elders and bishops would be pro-rated. Although necessity brought this change about, it also indicates again that the conference becomes of age.

### **The Mississippi Conference Bows in Prayer for the Family of the First President of Shaw University**

The Conference of 1878 added the name of Albert C. McDonald to its Roll of Honored Dead. He was born February 1, 1828 in Henry County, Indiana. He died on April 10, 1877 in Marshall County, Mississippi. He was an illustrious alumnus of Asbury University, Greencastle, Indiana.<sup>21</sup>

In 1853, the Reverend McDonald was received on trial in the Iowa Conference. He served for several years in the pastorate in this conference. In 1859, he transferred to the Missouri Conference and was appointed to the Hedding Charge at St. Louis. Two years later, he was assigned to Jefferson City, Missouri. By the statute of limitation enacted by the 1804 General Conference, he was required to move to another charge. From this charge, he enlisted as a Chaplain in the Federal Army.

After the Civil War, the Reverend McDonald identified himself with the mission work in the Southwest. He transferred to the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1866. He was appointed to the St. Mary's Charge on the New Orleans District. At the same time, he served as professor in the Thomson Institute. In 1867, he was appointed as presiding elder of the Holly Springs District. He served the district for three years. In 1870, he became the first president of Shaw University. He served for five years. In 1875, his

health began to fail him. He was appointed presiding elder of the Grenada District. He continued to serve the college as its financial agent. W. W. Hooper was elected as the second president of the college. In 1876, the Reverend McDonald was assigned to the Okolona District.

While he was out on one of his quarterly visits, he was stricken at the Mt. Moriah Church, Corinth, Mississippi. He started home on horseback. He made it as far as Potts Camp, Mississippi—twelve miles from Holly Springs. He became gravely ill; he was discovered by Mr. Burney Johnson, a Negro and a member of the Potts Camp Church. The Negro became the modern "Good Samaritan." He took Dr. McDonald to his home and ministered unto him. His last conscious act was to refuse brandy to ease his pains.

Interment was in Hill Crest Cemetery. Because of his missionary work with the colored people, his family was denied the privilege to bury him in the white cemetery. Neither could they bury him in the Negro cemetery. By now laws had been enacted forbidding Negroes and white from being buried in the same graveyard. Dr. McDonald was buried at the back of the cemetery between the white and Negro cemeteries. Even his grave stands today as a monument of his mission in the South. He was a reconciling force in the South. He worked arduously to heal the wound created by the Civil War.

### **The A. C. McDonald Scholarship Fund**

In appreciation for the invaluable services of Dr. McDonald, the following resolution was approved on January 21, 1878:

Resolved, That the Committee appointed to raise money for the erection of a monument to the memory of the late Dr. McDonald be and are hereby instructed to consider what can

be done to assist in educating his children and to devise ways and means to give such aid as possible.<sup>22</sup>

The scholarship fund was to aid in the education of his five children.

### **The Mushroom Growth of the Conference**

When the Mississippi Conference organized in 1869, it reported 8,732 full members. In twelve months, the conference had almost doubled its numerical strength. By 1878, the church membership had increased to 26,100 full members. It began with two elders in 1869; it had 60 full conference members in 1878. It was organized with two districts. By 1879, there were six districts.

### **The Negro Exodus**

The migration of Negroes from Mississippi in 1879 has been described as the "Negro Exodus."<sup>23</sup> It was in such proportion that it could be so aptly described. With the growing menace at their door, the Negroes became exasperated beyond endurance. Almost every edict had been enacted against their social welfare and every remonstrance had passed unheeded.

The Exodus may also be considered as a sequel of the loss of political power. This loss was largely due to the political revolution in 1875. After this revolution, Negroes were deprived of political freedom.

The Negroes were the victims of many types of discrimination. By some merchants, they were charged exorbitant prices. They were lynched for assault, robbery, insulting a woman, stealing hogs, renting land, participation in politics and even for robbing a grave to obtain material for a charm bag.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the Ku Klux Klan movement developed as a

type of guerrilla warfare. It was the lawless element of the population which attempted to terrorize the Negroes into submission. This organization was very active in Mississippi during the seventies. Not only did they murder Negroes but they also burned schools and Negro churches in the eastern counties of the state. Since the withdrawal of the Federal troops, the Negro had no protection.

The Supreme Court's decision of 1876, was not to the favor of the freedmen. In an unanimous decision, the court ruled on a case of the United States against Cruikshank. Its unanimous decision was that the federal government's power to punish Ku Klux Klan type violence was limited.<sup>25</sup> It declared that the 14th Amendment forbade only states—not private individuals from denying rights to citizens. Anti-Negro violence could only be punished by the states. The Negroes by-past history could not trust Mississippi to safeguard its rights as citizens.

In addition to the social factors, there were also economic factors for the out-migration. The drought of 1878 brought short crops and low prices. The yellow fever had its effect also. All these factors resulted in a great economic disaster and stark misery for the freedmen.

The Negroes had now come to believe that all his efforts were futile. Therefore the only alternative left was to leave Mississippi. Hence many Negroes began their trek to Kansas. It became their Paradise. According to one record, Negroes were arriving in Kansas at the rate of twenty to thirty per day.

The social unrest among Negroes in Mississippi was evidenced in other rebel states. To discover a solution for the problem a Negro convention was called. The convention was described as the National Conference of Colored Men of the United States. It convened in Nashville, Tennessee, May 6-9, 1879. It was attended by 140 delegates from 19

states and the District of Columbia.<sup>26</sup> The presiding officer was John R. Lynch from Mississippi.

There were differences of opinion at the convention regarding the Exodus. Frederick Douglas was an opponent of the out-migration.<sup>27</sup> He believed that the problem could only be solved by the Negroes remaining in the South. John M. Langston of Virginia expressed a contrary view, "Let the freedmen come to the North," he said, "let him go to the West and his contact with new men, new things, a new order of life, new moral and educational influences will advance him in the scale of being."<sup>28</sup>

The convention approved of a "reasonable migration." In addition, it approved of resolutions demanding social and political equality, a compulsory system of education. It voted to request that the federal government would assist by appropriating \$500,000 toward the travel expenses of the migrants.

The effect of the Exodus upon the Methodist Episcopal Churches in Mississippi will be described in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER III

## A DECADE OF INSTITUTIONAL PAINS (1880 - 1890)

THIS DECADE was fraught with many problems and opportunities. It was the period of growing pains of the institutional life of the conference.

It is inadmissible evidence of the maturing of an institution when it necessarily acts both to restrict and to preserve its members. As a social control measure, an institution finds it always expedient to impose standards that are in some sense—restrictions. This decade characterized the formulation of many of these standards.

#### **The Decline of Church Membership**

The Church membership showed a marked decline as a probable result of the Negro Exodus in 1879. In one year the membership declined 13 per cent. By the end of the decade, the trend pointed upward. By 1890, the conference reported 27,981 full members and 463 organized congregations.<sup>1</sup>

It is revealing also to note the ratio of Methodist membership to the total Negro population in Mississippi in 1890. In that year, the Negro population of Mississippi was 742,559. The Negro population constituted 57.9 per cent of the total population. The membership of the Negro of the Methodist Episcopal Church constituted only 3.7 per cent of the total Negro population. Only four out of every 100 Negroes living in Mississippi in 1890 were Methodists.

### **The Annual Conference Selects Its General Conference Delegates for 1880**

When the Annual Conference convened in Macon, Mississippi in 1880, it made its choice for General Conference delegates. For the first time in the history of the Conference, there were two Negroes chosen as ministerial delegates. The ministerial members elected were: J. W. Dunn and J. M. Shumpert. The election of J. M. Shumpert was the beginning of a long tenure in the General Conference. With the exception of M. W. Dogan, J. M. Shumpert had the longest tenure of any of the Mississippi Circuit Riders. The Reverend Shumpert served in nine General Conferences. In addition, he was the first reserve for 1908 and 1916. He served in the General Conference from 1880 to 1920. He has another distinction. He had the honor of being one of the youngest to serve in the General Conference. The Reverend Shumpert was born March 23, 1853 in Itawamba County. He was only twenty-six when he was first elected to serve in the General Conference. At the time of his first election, he was serving the Vincent Chapel Church, Grenada, Mississippi. He was admitted into the Conference in full connection in 1871.

The Lay Electoral Conference elected Lark C. DeShazo and James A. W. Moore.

### **The Conference Tabled The Resolution To Elect A Negro Bishop.**

By 1880, social pressure had increased for the election of a bishop of African descent. By that year, two Negro denominations of the Methodist faith were fully organized in the State.

In 1870, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church South issued the following statement:

It is our purpose . . . to call a General Conference to be holden next winter for the purpose of organizing them (the Negro

members) into an entirely separate church, thus enabling them to become their own *guides* and *governors*.<sup>2</sup>

Under the leadership of Bishop Robert Paine, Senior Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, the General Conference was called. Two Negro ministers were elected and consecrated bishops in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church which was founded in 1870. This mark of distinction was awarded:

W. H. Miles of Kentucky  
R. H. Vanderhorst of Georgia

With their election, a new denomination in the Methodist family was born.

The new denomination found some disfavor among the Negroes. By some, it was described as the "Rebel Church" or the "Old Slave Church." It found favor and support among the white Methodists in the South. In spite of opposition, it grew. By 1890, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church claimed a membership of 20,107 and 293 organizations within the State.<sup>3</sup>

By 1880, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was well on its way in the state. It was organized three years after the Christmas Conference of the Mississippi Mission Conference. In one year, this church reported a membership of 4,982; thirty-five churches and thirty Sunday Schools. By 1890, this denomination reported an aggregate membership of 10,270 and 42 churches.

Both of these sister denominations were working feverishly to win the Negro population of Mississippi. They claimed that Negro leadership was responsible for their mushroom growth. According to Vernon Wharton's study, the Colored Methodist Church claimed to have a larger membership in Mississippi than either of its Methodist rivals.

This claim is not justified in the light of statistics. In 1890, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church claimed 20,107 members and 293 organizations. The Mississippi Conference reported 27,981 members and 463 organized congregations. This report almost doubled the total membership of the two sister denominations in that year.

Despite this fact, indigenous leadership was advocated by a few of the Methodist constituency. Several were so persuaded that the secret of their success was found in Negro leadership. They were convinced that the Mississippi Conference would flourish also if it had its own "governors." Others evinced discriminatory judgment. This was pointed up in the vote upon the following resolution presented by J. M. Shumpert on January 19, 1880:

Whereas the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church is to be held in Cincinnati, Ohio in May, and

Whereas, the question of electing a colored bishop is again agitated,

Resolved, That it is the sense of this conference, if a man of African descent can be found, worthy and well qualified, we hereby instruct our delegates to vote for the same.

This resolution created lively debate. When the vote was taken, it was tabled.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Mississippi Conference Pays Tribute To Bishop Gilbert Haven**

On January 17, 1880, the Mississippi Conference paused to pay tribute to Bishop Gilbert Haven. Four years earlier, he had been the presiding officer of the Conference. More than that he had been leader in social righteousness and civil rights even during the war days.

He was born in Malden, Massachusetts on September 19,

1821. He was the son of Gilbert and Hannah Burrell Haven.

He received his early training at Wilbraham, Massachusetts. While studying there, he was converted. He continued his study at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. He graduated in 1846. In 1851, he was admitted into the New England Conference. His first appointment was North Hampton. He served also the following appointments: Wilbraham, Westfield, Roxbury and Cambridge.

In 1867, he was elected editor of the *Zion's Herald*. He used his pen to express in an uncompromising way his view upon injustice to people. He was a member of the 1868 and 1872 General Conferences. In 1872, at the General Conference in Brooklyn, New York, he was elected Bishop on Wednesday, May 22. This was one of the greatest surprises of the century. No one expected this "radical" to be chosen as bishop in the church." But, he was!

Gilbert Haven was a prophet of social righteousness. In the memorial address at the Mississippi Conference, Dr. R. S. Rust said:

He was earnest and entirely sincere in forming his own independent judgment as to the great matters and principles which concern not only the church but his fellow men generally and he had the manly, moral, and Christian courage to publish and defend his views and principles. But no man ever possessed a more kindly, friendly feeling toward not only his friends, but his enemies as well than Gilbert Haven, and for this reason those who abhorred his views could not but love and admire the man.

In speaking of him, one writer gives this touching account of an experience in Mississippi just seven years earlier:

Bishop Haven, the *beté noire* of the *segregationists*, employed twentieth century freedom rider and sit-in tactics during his travel. In 1873 in Mississippi he rode in a train car

'reserved' for colored passengers and ate in a Negro hotel in Vicksburg. While dining with Negro guests in a white hotel in Jackson, his party was relegated to a corner and 'screened off.' When he moved his table to the middle of the dining hall, he was not served, and left for another establishment." <sup>5</sup>

His colleagues had this to say about him:

As a man he was distinguished for all that was noble and true. He never failed a friend and his great, brave heart never treasured a thought of malice toward those who hated and abused him. Because of his practical sympathy and friendship for the oppressed and downtrodden, he was most bitterly maligned and yet he prayed for his enemies, but still reached out a hand of love to the victims of injustices, regardless of all consequences to himself.<sup>6</sup>

Gilbert Haven was pre-eminently a reformer. He was not a revolutionist. Never destructive, he had an intense abhorrence for everything wrong. "He hated slavery with all his mind, might and soul, but he loved his country with equal power."

On Sunday, November 16, 1879, he preached his last sermon at Arch Street Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In anticipation of death, he had ready some suggestions for his funeral. Among his suggestions was: "Father Mars must speak at my funeral, some colored man must be a pall-bearer."

On Saturday, January 3, 1880, Gilbert Haven died at the home of his mother in Malden, Massachusetts.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, January 6, 1880 at noon in Malden, Massachusetts. Among the participants were two Negroes. John N. Mars, a retired colored minister of the New England Conference spoke in laconic brevity:

I am glad with my heart that I feel the love of God shed abroad there. I only will occupy a little time to endorse what we already listened to.

Another Negro participant was T. B. Snowden, pastor of Revere Street Church who read the 183rd hymn: "How blest the righteous when he dies." He served also as a pall bearer for this Crusader of social righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Mississippi Conference Takes Action Regarding Its Ministerial Members**

On January 19, 1880, the conference voted to include the Roll of the Honored Dead within the Conference Journal. The following resolution was approved:

Resolved, That it is the sense of this conference that the names of all deceased ministers of the Mississippi Conference be printed in the minutes with the date of their admission and death.

Likewise, the conference took action on the announcement of the death of one of its members. The following resolution was approved:

When any one of our members is called from earth, it shall be the duty of the pastor at the place where the brother resided; or the nearest pastor or presiding elder of the district to notify all the preachers in the district, of such death and of the time set for the funeral services.<sup>8</sup>

### **The 1880 General Conference**

Two significant actions of the Cincinnati General Conference of 1880 had a direct effect upon the Mississippi Conference. The first action was regarding the election of a bishop of African descent. The second was the mandatory requirements for conference membership.

Since 1868, the agitation for the election of a Negro bishop had increased quadrennially. It had been gaining sympathetic support. Although the 1880 Annual Conference had tabled the discussion, its delegates agitated for the elec-

tion of a Negro bishop at the General Conference in Cincinnati. The publicity given to James Lynch, Mississippi delegate in 1872, served as an incentive for other aspirants. One newspaper expressed an opinion that Lynch would have received favorable consideration in that year had he not been so completely engaged in politics.

The 1880 General Conference could not by-pass the burning issue. The action it took was most unusual and does not lend itself to an easy interpretation.

After all the bishops had been elected, those necessary to fill the vacancies at that time, the Committee on Episcopacy brought a report to the floor recommending the election of an additional bishop of African descent. He would be consecrated with the other bishops. The special ballot was used in the 1920 General Conference when the first General Superintendents were elected.

The report generated much debate on the floor of the General Conference. The Committee on Episcopacy justified its recommendation by saying "it would be to the best interest of the church in general and to the Negro group in particular." After hours of debate, the General Conference voted to postpone action indefinitely. The motion represented the genius of an astute politician. It was simply a motion to reject the main question. Although it was debatable; it could not be amended. The motion carried by a vote of 227 for and 137 against.<sup>9</sup>

The vote was most encouraging to the supporters of the resolution. It had a tonic effect upon the minority group which lost. Instructed by past failures and availing themselves of the growing popular support, the agitators continued. It took 50 years to convince the General Conference that a Negro was capable of serving as a General Superintendent in the Church.

### **The Mississippi Conference Refuses To Admit Applicants**

The 1881 Annual Conference was faced with the enforcement of the new law regarding ministerial candidates. The 1880 General Conference had added the following question to the Discipline:

“Will you wholly abstain from the use of tobacco?”

All candidates for the itinerant ministry were required to answer in the affirmative. Previously, it was left to the Annual Conference to decide whether it would require this pledge of its candidates. Now it was the law of the Church.

Standing at the door of the conference for admission were two white ministers: L. O. Crowder and James Drayden. Both refused to take the pledge to abstain from the use of tobacco.<sup>10</sup> On January 13, 1881, the conference voted not to accept them until they complied with the disciplinary requirements. On the next day, L. O. Crowder resolved by “the grace of God to refrain from the use of tobacco.” For two years longer, James Drayden refused to take the pledge. He remained on trial. On January 20, 1883, he took the pledge and was admitted into full connection.

At the same conference session of 1883, John W. Faulkner was reported by his presiding elder as having not abstained from the use of tobacco on the account of ill health. The conference enjoined upon his presiding elder the responsibility of helping Faulkner to find a “worthy substitute for tobacco by the next conference.” On January 16, 1884, he was admitted into full connection of the Mississippi Conference.

### **The Problem of Location**

In 1882, the Mississippi Conference was faced with the problem of involuntary location of one of its members. In

1881, Riley Walker was requested to locate for "general unacceptability." He refused to locate. This was his prerogative for at least one year. Hence, he was assigned. On January 20, 1882, the Mississippi Conference voted to locate Riley Walker involuntarily. He was the first to be so located. On January 22, 1875, the conference voted to locate Edmund Scarborough and P. Hart at their own request.

### **The Conference Approves Two More Schools**

Previously, the Mississippi Conference or its predecessor had approved of Thomson Institute, Shaw University and Fowler Institute. The latter school was to serve the culturally deprived white citizens of Mississippi.

In 1883, Moses Adams, an ex-slave and founder of the Meridian Academy, presented the following resolution to the conference:

Whereas the Meridian Academy has been received by the General Committee of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church as one of the schools of said church in the Mississippi Conference to take said school under its control; Be therefore Resolved, That the Mississippi Conference would recognize Meridian Academy.<sup>11</sup>

This resolution was approved unanimously.

This school began as a preparatory school for Shaw University. Its first president was J. H. Brooks. He graduated from Shaw University in 1881. He served as president of this institution until 1892. The name of the school was changed in memory of Bishop Gilbert Haven; the Apostle of freedom. It has the unique distinction of being the only school established by the Freedmen's Aid Society that always had Negro presidents. It closed in 1929.

In 1883, Gammon Theological Seminary was established in Atlanta, Georgia. Its specific purpose was to train men of all races and denominations for work in the South.

On February 9, 1885, the Mississippi Conference approved the school to train its ministers. The first class graduated from Gammon in 1886. In this class, was Noah H. Williams, a member of the Mississippi Conference. By 1891, the following Mississippians had completed their theological training at Gammon Seminary: John L. Wilson; Pezavia O'Connell; John C. Hibbler; John W. Davis; Thomas W. Davis. Six of the first thirty-three graduates were Mississippians. Native Mississippians are still being trained here.

### **The Conference During the Gilded Age**

The Grant Era in American History has been branded as the beginning of the "Gilded Age."<sup>12</sup> This phrase has been used to suggest the cheap, surface quality of taste and the worship of wealth that accompanied it. Warren Sweet has referred to it as the period of voracious money-getting in the United States.

In the field of architecture, it was called the Parvenu Period. It was a period of extravagant buildings. The buildings were only symptomatic. Tastes and standards were not only revealed in the types of buildings, but also in the luxury among the newly rich. Changes in social attitudes and in value scales were evidenced in this age in no uncertain terms.

During this period, discipline became an acute problem. The church experienced difficulty with its members. As an adherent to the puritan tradition, the Methodist Episcopal Church recognized the laxity among its members in its 1872 General Conference. It amended the Discipline referring to imprudent conduct by adding:

But in cases of neglect of duty of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers, the buying or selling or using intoxicants as a beverage, dancing, playing a game of chance, attending theatres, horse races, circuses, dancing parties or

patronizing dancing schools or taking such other amusements as are obviously misleading or questionable moral tendency or disobedience to the Order of the Discipline.

This amendment was debated at length. Finally, by a count vote, it was approved: 179 to 75 against.<sup>13</sup>

The Mississippi Conference became acutely aware of the conduct of its members. On January 20, 1883, the conference approved the following:

The various forms of frivolity indulged in by many of our members in certain localities is not sufficiently rebuked by private admonition. We believe this to be the better way in most cases, open rebuke, sometimes induces greater opposition, when wise and loving counsel would effect a cure . . . Our position on the strict observance of the Christian Sabbath is well defined . . .

Resolved, That we as members of the church pledge ourselves to uphold each other in the kind, firm and faithful administration of our Discipline in all its parts, not for wrath but conscience sake.<sup>14</sup>

One year later, the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South condemned the running of trains on Sunday. It was believed to be a desecration of the Sabbath. The following is an excerpt from the resolution adopted:

Our legislatures possess the legal and constitutional authority to enact statutes which shall prohibit trains from passing through their territories on the Sabbath, then ought we not in our quarterly and Annual Conferences as Methodists petition and persistently petition our legislative bodies to stop this running of trains on the Sabbath day of worship God in the beauty of Holiness.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Mississippi Conference Makes A New Rule For Men From Other Denominations**

From 1880 to 1887, the Mississippi Conference admitted 15 men from other denominations. This approximated 15

per cent of the total number admitted in full connection. Conversely, nineteen had terminated membership by withdrawal, expulsion, voluntary and involuntary location. Approximately sixty per cent of the men terminating their membership were admitted on credentials.

The Conference saw the necessity of stricter discipline and closer examinations of the men entering on credentials. On February 8, 1887, the conference adopted, by standing vote, the following resolution:

Resolved, That any minister coming to us from other churches hereafter be required to come before a committee for examination, before entering our conference and if the committee reports favorably, they may be received according to their ministerial standing they occupied in their church, and if the committee reports unfavorably they shall be received on trial.<sup>16</sup>

### Two Sister Denominations Unite in Social Witnessing

For 15 years, the estranged sisters of Methodism had been in open conflict. In 1882, Bishop Robert Paine of the Methodist Episcopal Church South initiated a plan whereby Methodism could make a common witness in the state. At that time, the Senior Bishop lived in Aberdeen, Mississippi and had first hand knowledge of the menacing effect of alcoholism upon the people of Mississippi. He sent the following letter to Bishop J. T. Peck:

January 23, 1882

My dear Bishop Peck;

I am confident you will appreciate the motive which prompts this note.

The friends of temperance in the state have secured a "Local Option Law," by which the sale of intoxicants is prohibited in towns and districts, unless a majority of citizens *petition* for it. In looking over the list of names published for such licenses in every community, I found a great many

names of colored Methodists as well as a few of our white members. Might it not be well for you to suggest at least to your presiding elders, that they discourage and oppose signing such petitions? We can never succeed in repressing the great evil if our colored people will not assist us. It is not a question of politics, but of morals. A word from you might do good. God bless you.

Yours truly,  
R. Paine<sup>17</sup>

The letter was received and ordered published in the Conference Journal.

On January 23, 1882, the Mississippi Conference approved the following resolution:

Resolved, That as preachers, we will everywhere use our influence to prevent the signing of petitions for saloons, where we may be stationed; and that, as soon as the friends of temperance in the state make the issue of a constitutional amendment for complete legal prohibition in the State, we will join heartily with the friends of temperance and righteousness against the rum traffic.<sup>18</sup>

With the adoption of this resolution, concerted action between the Methodist branches began in Mississippi against the rum traffic. The conference authorized a committee consisting of the presiding elders to work with a similar committee from the North Mississippi Conference in securing proper temperance legislation in the State. With this concerted action, courtship began between the two branches of Methodism.

### **The Conference Speaks Its Mind Regarding Secret Organizations**

Secret societies were mushrooming in the United States during this period. They were local in origin but spread quickly to outlying territory. Towns such as Jackson, Natchez and Vicksburg were the breeding ground for these

organizations. By 1885, one undertaker carried the accounts of twenty such organizations.<sup>19</sup>

Outstanding among the organizations was the Loyal Leagues.<sup>20</sup> It was a secret oath-bound organization. Every male Negro from 18 to 70 was eligible for membership—it had a few white members as well. James Lynch was an organizer of the Loyal League. It was an outgrowth of northern patriotic organizations established during the war.

The reasons for the rapid growth of these secret societies were numerous. The initiation was appealing to some. The initiation into the mysteries was solemn and impressive. Negroes derived social benefits from them. It was a source of recreation for the Negroes with pent up emotions and no recreational facilities. The usual custom in Mississippi was for these organizations to hold a social gathering bi-monthly. At these meetings, they would dance and play games. In addition, they would discuss local politics.

One reason for the growth of these secret organizations was the growing alienation between the two races. Secret societies served to cement the unity among the Negroes. It became also an incipient threat to the white supremacists. Weatherhead believed that Negroes were driven into unities.<sup>21</sup> They segregated themselves into clubs and national organizations and at the same time, they cried out against Jim Crowism in all forms. These oath-bound organizations served as a means of group identification.

These societies provided medical and death benefits for their members. They provided necessary medical care for deprived people.

Many Negroes found it difficult to secure the services of a doctor during this period. They were unable to defray the fees. Neither could they provide for the burial expenses of their relatives.

These organizations were secret societies. This made them

very appealing to the Negroes. Because they did not trust the plantation owners, they felt the need for secrecy about strategy and plans. In addition, the "use of passwords and knocks" found favor among the recently emancipated Negro.

The secret societies began to compete with churches. They were demanding upon their members. Members were required to pay their dues and attend meetings. Otherwise, they were expelled. Hence, members became more loyal to these organizations than the church.

On January 19, 1884, J. B. Griffin presented the following resolution to the conference for consideration:

Whereas, There is a great and growing evil in our midst that has impoverished the majority of the people in various cities of Mississippi, and other states, and, if allowed to continue, will prove detrimental to our race both in their relations as Christians and citizens. We believe this evil to be attributable to the over number of secret societies that are now existing in our state, and we believe the financial failures in the churches of Mississippi are due mainly to the assessments and dues in many of these secret societies, therefore,

Be it resolved, That it is the duty of the ministers of Christ not only to feed the flock of God on gospel food but to warn, to enlighten and persuade them to turn from anything that hinders the cause of Christ and their social, moral and industrial conditions,

Resolved, That we believe the ministers will be held accountable for any evil that may foresee coming upon their flock, and fail to warn them thereof,

Resolved, That in view of evils and demoralizing influences existing upon every interest of the church by the over number of secret and benevolent societies springing up like mushrooms among people. We pledge ourselves to use every legitimate means in our power to counteract their undue influence in our churches.<sup>22</sup>

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Secret societies had begun to plague Methodism many

years earlier. A group of ministers and laymen seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church. They formed a new organization. The new group adopted a congregational type of polity. Among the tenets approved was that no minister or layman can be connected with secret oath-bound societies.<sup>23</sup>

They were widespread in the United States. In 1876, a petition came in to the General Conference from the Central New York Conference, the Erie Conference and from the following places:

Freeport, Illinois; Sparta, Ohio; Ellington, New York.

In 1880, the Iowa Conference presented a petition regarding secret societies. In 1884, the Genesee Conference presented a memorial. The General Conference referred the petitions and memorials to the Committee of the State of the Church.

On February 6, 1888, the following resolution was presented to the Mississippi Conference for its determination:

Whereas, according to reliable statistics, there are about 1,000,000 of the Colored people in the South who belong to secret societies, and

Whereas, secret societies are proving detrimental to the financial and spiritual growth of the church and the race in that they enter society and interfere with its various relations, both civil and social. They enter the church and press their way between the pastor and people. They produce alienation and distrust. They foster discord, conflict and division . . .

Resolved, Therefore, that it is the duty of each and all the ministers of this conference to oppose them in public and in private by precept and example as the enemies of the Church and Race.<sup>24</sup>

This resolution was debated and tabled. Although it was tabled, the problem became more acute.

### **The Centennial Celebration**

In 1884, the Methodist Episcopal Church celebrated its

first Centennial of organized Methodism in the United States. The 1880 General Conference had authorized the celebration.

The Mississippi Conference made plans for its celebration at its 1884 session. It elected a Centennial Committee consisting of W. W. Hooper, H. R. Revels, A. K. Davis, S. A. Cowan, J. M. Shumpert, A. M. Trotter and E. L. Gilliam, Esq.

The committee recommended the following:

- (1) Annual Conference would celebrate a Grand Jubilee in October, 1884;
- (2) Each district would conduct a district rally in preparation for the Jubilee;
- (3) Each member would contribute a minimum of twenty-five cents as a Centennial offering;
- (4) The money would be used for Church Extension.<sup>25</sup>

### **Memorial Services for Bishop Matthew Simpson**

On February 9, 1885, the conference conducted a Memorial Service for the sainted Bishop Simpson. The following are excerpts from the Memorial message:

Bishop Matthew Simpson on June the 18th, 1884, was released from further service to God and His cause and from the sufferings, trials and hardships often attendant upon that service and even shall rest from his labors while his works do follow him . . . All who knew Bishop Simpson and were capable of appreciating a well cultivated mind, whose maturally uncommon powers were developed by a thorough course of study . . . and hence, when he fell in death, the cause of education lost one of its most brilliant and accomplished preachers and defenders of its glorious doctrine.<sup>26</sup>

The late Bishop Simpson was born in Cadiz, Ohio on June 20, 1811. He graduated from Madison College, Pennsylvania. At 19, he was elected tutor in the college. In 1837, he was elected Vice President of Allegheny College.

Two years later, he was elected president of DePauw University. Here he served for nine years. He proved to be an efficient administrator. His next responsible position assumed was the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*. From this position, he was elected bishop on May 25, 1852. He was elected on the first ballot—a majority vote was all that was necessary.

After he had studied medicine for three years (1830-1833) he gave up medicine to enter the ministry. He was admitted on trial at the Pittsburgh Conference of 1833 and was appointed junior preacher on the St. Clairsville (Ohio) Circuit. Most of his work was in the educational field.

Matthew Simpson was a great orator of Celtic lineage, he inherited the Irish gift and turn for eloquence. Next to John Summerfield was Matthew Simpson in oratory. He was an intimate friend of Abraham Lincoln. He was chosen to give the funeral oration over the body of the great martyred president at Springfield, Illinois.

Bishop Simpson died in Philadelphia. He was buried in the West Lauderdale Hill Cemetery on the banks of the Schuylkill.

### **The White Ministers and Members Became a Problem**

In 1865, the Methodist Episcopal Church was faced with the problem of what to do with the freedmen. In 1880, the problem in Mississippi was reversed. The Mississippi Conference was faced with the problem of small struggling white congregations.

The conference was ever hopeful that the problem could be solved within the present conference arrangement. This sentiment was expressed in the adoption of a resolution in 1880 affirming that:

A majority of the whites as well as a very large majority

of the colored members of the Mississippi Conference are utterly opposed to any separation on colored line.

This resolution was adopted in knowledge of the decision of the General Conference of 1876. It granted authority to the bishops to divide the Southern Conferences (of the Methodist Episcopal Church) along racial lines when the majority of the whites and the colored members requested it.

In 1882, the Mississippi Conference was faced with the problem again. The conference approved that "should it be found that any members of this conference can be better accommodated elsewhere, the bishop holding the next conference is hereby respectfully requested to transfer them with their charges according to the Discipline to the Alabama Conference." No further action was taken in five years.

On February 1, 1888, the problem confronted the conference again. On this date, J. C. Eckles, a white minister, presented the following resolution:

Whereas, it is believed by some of the members of the church within the bounds of our conference that it would be to the interest of that part of our church community known as the white work to be attached to and become a part of a white conference in some one of the adjourning states, Therefore,

Resolved, That we pray the General Conference in its next session to grant permission and authority to the presiding bishop to transfer that part of our conference above referred to as may prove convenient and at such time as may be thought most expedient.

The resolution was approved and sent to the 1888 General Conference for its determination.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Mississippi Conference Divides**

The Mississippi Conference had grown in numerical strength. At the same time, it became a problem of super-

vision of the conference and entertainment of it. The Conference decided to divide. In 1888, it approved a resolution to request the General Conference to grant permission for the same.

On May 11, 1888, J. M. Shumpert, delegate from Mississippi, presented a resolution to the General Conference. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Boundaries without debate.

On May 29, 1888, the General Conference approved the following resolution:

The Mississippi Conference may, during the next four years, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting, with the approval of the bishop presiding, divide into two Annual Conferences.<sup>28</sup>

In 1889, the Mississippi Conference began to perfect plans for the division of the conference. On January 25, 1889, J. C. Eckles presented the following resolution:

Whereas, the Mississippi Conference at its last session asked for an enabling act by which, during the quadrennium, the Mississippi Annual Conference might be divided which prayer was granted, and whereas, there are numerous difficulties to be overcome respecting the line forming the division; And whereas, haste on this matter might occasion difficulties that would be everlasting in the future, therefore,

Resolved, that we ask the bishop to appoint a committee consisting of the presiding elders and one other from each district to form the dividing line and make recommendations to the bishop and the conference at its next session which in their judgment would be a fair and proper adjustment of work.<sup>29</sup>

This resolution was approved. The following persons were appointed to constitute the Boundary Committee:

J. C. Eckles  
Warren McDonald

C. P. Head  
N. H. Williams

H. R. Sewell  
H. R. Revels  
B. L. Crump  
N. Cannon  
J. M. Shumpert

D. H. Williams  
D. D. Goodwin  
J. Campbell  
A. M. Trotter  
A. D. Payne

### **The Observance of Emancipation Day**

In light of the fact that there was a difference of opinion regarding the celebration of Emancipation Day, the conference adopted a report designating a day. In 1889, S. A. Cowan presented the following resolution:

Whereas, many of our people seem to be at a loss as to the most appropriate day to observe as a National Thanksgiving Day for their freedom, therefore be it,

Resolved, That we recommend the first day of January as the proper day to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation of the American Negro.<sup>30</sup>

### **The 1890 Conference Session**

The 1890 Conference convened in Vicksburg, Mississippi. It was a historical event indeed. Canton was the birthplace of the Mississippi Conference in 1869. Vicksburg will be remembered as the place where the conference was divided.

On January 25, 1890, S. A. Cowan made the motion that the conference would divide into two conferences. The vote was taken by ballot. The motion was approved by a two-thirds majority.<sup>31</sup> The bishop announced that the conference was now legally divided.

The next order of business was the Report of the Committee on Boundary. The Committee recommended that "beginning at the north boundary line of Kemper, Neshoba, Leake, Madison, Yazoo, Sharkey and Issaquena counties to the Mississippi River." The report was approved and the boundary line was established until the next session of the General Conference.

The new conference was named the Upper Mississippi Conference. It encompassed the thirty-eight northern counties of the State. It began with 79 full members and 18 probationers. The new Mississippi Conference had 60 full members and six probationers.

The new Mississippi Conference voted to hold its first session at Moss Point, Mississippi. The Upper Mississippi Conference selected Holly Springs for its first session. The conference adjourned sine die on January 28, 1890. The next chapter will describe the birth of the Upper Mississippi Conference.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BIRTH OF A NEW CONFERENCE (1891 - 1901)

THE YEAR OF 1891 was pregnant with many notable events. It was the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century. Outstanding events occurred on the calendar of inter-faith groups. The Methodist Episcopal Church recognized it as the centennial year of the death of its revered founder. On March 2, 1791, John Wesley died. The men of color had fond memories of the centennial year for an additional reason. On February 26, 1791, John Wesley wrote his last letter to William Wilberforce to hearten him in his efforts against the African slave trade. Wilberforce had introduced a resolution in the British Parliament for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. "Go on," Wesley said, "in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it." <sup>1</sup>

On the Methodist calendar, the year 1891 will not only be remembered as a centennial year but the year will be remembered in Methodist history in its own right. The second Ecumenical Conference of World Methodism convened in the nation's capital, October 7-21, 1891 with 500 representatives from 29 Methodist bodies throughout the world. It only represented a partial fulfillment of Wesley's ideal—"The World is my Parish." Assembled in Washington was a dramatic testimony of the growing influence of the Methodist Church throughout the world. Indeed, it was a significant occasion.

The adherents to the Catholic faith will also remember

the year. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. It was called the Workingman's Charter. This document was in defense of private property as a natural right. Emphasis was placed upon the family as the cornerstone of society. Labor was not to be viewed as a commodity.

Communicants of the Protestant Episcopal Church deserve a right to remember the year as well. On April 29, 1891, the famous pulpiteer, Phillip Brooks was elected bishop by a large majority of clergy and laymen.<sup>2</sup>

Two Methodist clergymen can very well remember 1891. The oldest living bishop, Herbert Welsh, made his first report to the New York Conference. He had served his first year at Bedford Station on the New York District. On September 10, 1891, there was born to the union of Julius Caesar and Susie (Carr) Love, a baby boy. He was baptized in the Methodist Episcopal Church as Edgar Amos. Sixty years later, he was consecrated a bishop in the Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Mississippi Circuit Riders will continue to refer to this year with thanksgiving. It will continue to be a memorable year in the history of Mississippi Methodism. This year marked the organization of the Upper Mississippi Conference, the 93rd Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

It is the last offspring of the Mississippi Mission Conference. The Texas Conference, the first offspring, was organized at Houston, Texas on January 3, 1867. Two offsprings were born in the same year. On January 7, 1869, the Mississippi Conference was organized at Canton, Mississippi. One week later, January 14, 1869, the Louisiana Conference became the third offspring of the Mississippi Conference. On January 7, 1874, the West Texas Conference was born in Austin, Texas.

By the last decade of the 19th century, five conferences had developed out of the missionary endeavors in the Southwest. Less than four decades, the missionary work in the Southwest had produced 411 full conference members. It had established 799 churches. The five conferences had an aggregate church membership of 60,512 by 1890. These are the dividends from the investment of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southwest.

### **The First Session of the Upper Mississippi Conference**

On February 5, 1891, all roads led to Holly Springs. At Asbury Methodist Church, the Upper Mississippi Conference was organized. The presiding bishop was Edward Gayer Andrews.

The conference elected the Reverend J. L. Wilson, Secretary. F. H. Banton was chosen as its statistician and Richard Sewell was elected as the first treasurer.

The conference was organized with five districts:

Aberdeen  
Corinth  
Greenville  
Holly Springs  
Yazoo River

It began with 17,131 church members and 88 pastoral charges. Seventy-four men were in full connection and 17 were probationers.

The year 1891 was not only the beginning of a new conference, but it also marked the year of the itinerant ministry for the following ministers:

J. H. Whitlock  
Jacob B. Starkey  
George J. Dobson  
Jaillous Smith

Charles W. Whitfield  
Grant Orange  
Elmer C. Conoway  
John N. C. Coggins  
Charles W. Butler

### Women Seek Equal Rights in the Church

Since 1872, women have sought equal rights in the Church. The 1872 General Conference defined a "layman as any member of the Church who was not a member of an Annual Conference." Under this definition, women assumed, and rightfully so, that they were laymen. From that time forward, the women waged a battle at each succeeding General Conference. For three quadrennia, the General Conference by-passed the issue in a polite manner. In 1888, the General Conference consented to present it to the church according to the constitutional routine. In October and November, 1890, the church members, twenty-one years of age and older, had the opportunity to vote upon the constitutional amendment.

In 1891, the presiding elders of the conference reported the results of the vote. The total vote cast: 4,269. There were 1313 voting in favor; 2956 voting against.

On February 6, 1891, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted upon the Constitutional Amendment. The vote was 39 for and 25 against.<sup>3</sup> The vote was 9 less than three-fourths majority necessary to approve of a constitutional amendment. The Upper Mississippi Conference did not favor admitting women into the membership of the General Conference.

But the struggle for equality continued. This perseverance bore fruit. In 1904, the General Conference granted women the right to membership in the legislative body of the Church. The admission of women to the General Conference was a

victorious culmination of a long and difficult battle. It took just 32 years to remove the discriminatory bar against the fairer sex in the Methodist Episcopal Church. It took longer in the Upper Mississippi Conference. In 1920, Mrs. Mattie Ferguson, the president of Woman's Home Missionary Society was the first lady to be so honored. In 1936, Mrs. Lillian Rogers was the second to be elected by the conference. She was appointed also to serve in the uniting conference in 1939. Sixteen years later, the laymen elected Mrs. Mary Rodgers, Conference President of the Woman's Society of Christian Service. She was the third lady to be elected from the conference in the last half century. A lady has been elected every sixteen years.

### **The Unfinished Business of the Mississippi Conference**

When the Mississippi Conference adjourned sine die in 1890, it left unfinished business. It failed to make provisions for the superannuated preachers. Two questions were left unanswered:

- (1) To whom will the retired preachers be amenable?
- (2) Which conference will assume the pension responsibility?

A committee was raised to confer with a similar committee from the Mississippi Conference. After deliberating with the Mississippi Committee, the Committee reported: That the Upper Mississippi Conference would assume pension responsibility for the following:

Thomas Brown  
Gilford Carr  
John Eanes  
Wesley Jones  
Miles Proctor  
Henry York

### **The Quarter Centennial Celebration Of the Freedmen's Aid Society**

For twenty-five years, the Freedmen's Aid Society has been at work in Mississippi. It had a tremendous effect upon the upgrading of the training of the freedmen in the State. In appreciation, the conference voted on February 9, 1891, to participate in a church-wide Quarter Centennial Celebration. It designated the second Sunday in May as Centennial Sunday. It voted \$1,500 as its financial goal for the Jubilee Thank offering.

### **The Ecumenical Conference, 1891**

The Upper Mississippi Conference from its beginning showed an ecumenical spirit. It elected the following to attend the second ecumenical Conference at Washington, D.C.:

H. R. Revels  
C. E. Libby  
H. H. Avant  
A. J. Howard

### **The Transfer of White Ministers and Congregations**

For a decade, the white congregations had been the primary concern of the conference. In 1892, the General Conference granted permission for the white congregations to be transferred with their ministers to other conferences.

On January 22, 1893, the Alabama Conference adopted the following resolution:

We hereby accept the provisions of the enabling act, by which the white work in Upper Mississippi Conference may be transferred to the Alabama Conference when the said conference complies with the said act.<sup>4</sup>

On February 3, 1893, the Upper Mississippi Conference approved the following resolution:

Whereas, the small white membership of the Upper Mississippi Conference has been largely isolated, making the appointments of pastors an inconvenience for the bishop and the elders,

Whereas, the General Conference of 1892, passed an enabling act, providing for the transfer of said membership to the Jurisdiction of the Alabama Conference, and,

Whereas, it is our own judgment that such transfer will be advantageous to the said white membership without impairing the Upper Mississippi Conference,

Resolved, That we the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference consent to transfer.<sup>5</sup>

The resolution was signed by L. O. Crowder (white), W. E. Mask, and J. L. Wilson, secretary of the conference. The resolution was approved by 54 for and 4 against.

The die was now cast; it was perhaps the only expedient thing to do at that time. Nevertheless, there were a few who argued that the transfer was not the solution to the problem. Against this argument, the exponents of the resolution enumerated many factors which mutilated against the congregations remaining in the Upper Mississippi Conference.

There were historical factors favoring the transfer. As early as 1868, the General Conference had set a precedent yielding to the request to permit the organization of a Negro Conference in Kentucky. It became known as the Lexington Conference. In 1872, E. T. Fuller presented a resolution to the General Conference from Georgia. The resolution requested permission to be set off as a colored Annual Conference. James Lynch, from Mississippi, opposed the resolution. His reason was that it would set up "the altar of caste." He regretted to see the church catering to ideas of caste when the country was trying to rid itself of it. He opposed "colored" in the church law. On the contrary, however, conferences were pleading to continue as an inclusive society.

On May 9, 1872, the Louisiana Conference presented a memorial against separate conferences for colored people. Likewise, the South Carolina Conference presented a similar resolution on May 13, 1872. On May 14, 1872, a Minority Report came to the floor of the General Conference from Georgia protesting the organization of Negro Conferences.

The diversity of opinion showed, without doubt, the difficulty of the problem. The General Conference once again took a middle of the road approach. The 1876 General Conference authorized the bishops to divide the conferences in the South when mutually agreeable to the majority of both groups and approved by the presiding bishop.

In addition to the historical factors, there were other factors as well. Administration of the white charges was involved. By 1890, all of the presiding elders, excepting one, were Negroes. The presiding elders were authorized by the Discipline to preside in quarterly conferences and supervise pastors in the absence of the bishop. By now, the social relationships in Mississippi were so estranged, that this responsibility was very impracticable.

Because of this fact, the white churches were moved from district to district, depending upon where the white presiding elder was appointed. It became a checker game indeed. One typical example will elucidate the matter: From 1880 to 1893, the white churches were changed several times. Walthall Charge was on the Okolona District in 1880. Its presiding elder was a Caucasian. In 1887, J. M. Shumpert, a Negro, was appointed to the Okolona District. Walthall Charge was moved to the Holly Springs District. Again its presiding elder was a Caucasian.

Another factor was the appointment of white ministers. Since 1779, there was a statute of limitation on the tenure of ministers in the Methodist Church. The minister was

limited to one year. In 1804, the General Conference approved of two years. In 1864, it was extended to three years. The General Conference amended the law not to refer to ministers serving in colored conferences as missionaries. Although the Mississippi Conference voted to the contrary, the General Conference of 1888 set the limit at five years.

The white ministers were not only handicapped by the statute of limitation, they had few charges in which they could itinerate. The pastoral record of L. O. Crowder, a white minister, is a typical example. In 1881, he was admitted into full connection in the Mississippi Conference. He served:

|                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Walthall                   | 1880-1882 |
| Bankston                   | 1882-1883 |
| Walthall (the second time) | 1884      |
| Bankston (the second time) | 1885-1887 |
| Chester                    | 1888-1889 |

In 1890, he transferred to the Arkansas Conference. After one year, he returned to the Upper Mississippi Conference. From 1892 until his transfer to the Alabama Conference, he was placed on the supernumerary list.

The fourth factor in the matter was a growing disaffection. Two racial groups were becoming more and more estranged. By 1890, there were laws on the statute books prohibiting free social intercourse between the races. Segregation had now become codified. As a result, Negroes were victims of all types of discriminatory practices. They were banned from white barber shops, restaurants, hotels and theatres.<sup>6</sup>

In October, 1883, the United States Supreme Court in a fashion, outlawed the Civil Rights Act of 1875. Again, it declared that the Federal government could not intervene in acts of discrimination by private individuals.<sup>7</sup> After the decision, discriminatory practices became more pronounced in Mississippi.

On August 12, 1890, the Constitutional Convention met in Jackson. Its main purpose was to alter the suffrage regulations in such a way as legally to exclude the majority of Negroes from their right of franchise.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the century, Negroes were disfranchised by direct legislation.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Becomes a Negro Conference**

On January 13, 1894, L. O. Crowder and his charge were transferred to the Alabama Conference.<sup>9</sup> At the time of transfer, the charge reported 70 full members. At the same conference, the Cumberland Mission—Itawamba and Reid—was transferred to the same conference. At the time of transfer, this charge was supplied by A. M. Dykes. It had a membership of 60. He became a supply pastor in the Alabama Conference. On January 15, 1896, he was admitted into the Alabama Conference. Another supply, formerly from the Upper Mississippi Conference was D. S. Lowery. He was appointed to the Maynard Cove Charge in the Alabama Conference in 1894.

Other white ministers were transferred to other conferences. In 1894, J. R. Trett transferred to the Nebraska Conference. He continued to serve as the principal of the Woodland Academy. C. E. Libby transferred to the East Maine Conference but, he too continued to be the president of Rust College until 1897. The last white minister to transfer was J. C. Eckles. He transferred in 1899 to the East Tennessee Conference. For several years, he was already serving in the conference as the president of Murphy College, Sevierville, Tennessee. One retired white minister, John Eanes, remained a member of the conference until death. He died in October, 1904. By 1905, the conference was a Negro conference. Forty years after the organization of the Mississippi Mission Conference, the conference is a Negro conference.

The Methodist Church in the Northern Conferences in the nineteen sixties could very well be faced with a similar problem of the Upper Mississippi Conference as relating to ministerial appointment. The problem would be in reverse. The Upper Mississippi Conference was faced with the problem of few small struggling white congregations. The Northern Conferences may be faced with a few Negro congregations. Specific reference may be made to the conferences in which the Lexington Conference was merged. In several of these conferences, only a few Negro congregations were transferred. The itinerant system could easily become handicapped if Negro ministers are only appointed to predominantly Negro congregations. Unless the inclusive ministry became the practice in these conferences rather than the exception, Negro ministers will be frozen in appointments for an indefinite period of time. The itinerary is still the genius of the Methodist system and must be preserved.

### **Woodland Academy Is Transferred Also**

In the transferring of white ministers and congregations, the Woodland Academy was also transferred to the Alabama Conference. Woodland Academy was an institution created to serve the culturally deprived white people of Mississippi. It was organized in 1886, at Clarkson, Mississippi. It was chartered by the State in 1890. Its first president was Dr. S. S. Steele. In 1891, it reported an enrollment of 74 white students.

In 1889, the Mississippi Conference adopted the following statement about the school:

Modesty forbids of more than a mention of Woodland Seminary—Pray for its success, will you endorse it by now raising a collection of \$20.00 for a campus fence.<sup>10</sup>

In 1896, the Alabama Conference recorded the following statement in its journal about the institution:

Woodland Academy—situated in the territory acquired from the Mississippi Conference is still doing good work in the cause of education and commends itself to the parents and guardians who wish to place their boys and girls under its refining and Christian influence.<sup>11</sup>

### **Memoirs For Bishop John P. Newman**

The sudden passing of Bishop Newman brought a cloud of pathos over the whole Methodist family in the Southwest. He was the leader in giving rebirth to the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southwest. He was the original missionary from the North. He was a Charter member of the Mississippi Mission Conference.

John Phillip Newman was born on September 1, 1826 in New York. He pursued training at the Seminary at Cazenovia, New York.<sup>12</sup> In 1849, he was admitted into the Oneida Conference (Central New York) through the Conference Course of Study. He served in the pastorate of this conference for seven years. Later, he transferred to the New York Conference. From this conference, he transferred to the Mississippi Mission Conference on December 25, 1865.

For five years, he worked assiduously as a missionary among the Negroes of the Southwest. He won the admiration of Negroes early. He was accepted as a conscientious missionary.

On March 3, 1869, he transferred to the Baltimore Conference. He was appointed to the Metropolitan Church in Washington, D. C. It was a newly organized congregation. The church had a membership of 194 full members. The estimated salary for the church was \$4,200.00.

The church presented a glorious opportunity for the missionary to continue his missionary endeavor. His evangelistic

zeal and winsome personality won many new members for the church. In addition to his parish responsibilities, he served as Chaplain of the United States Senate.

During his pastorate in Washington, he developed an intimate friendship with General Grant. He administered the sacrament of baptism to this General. This act created for him unfavorable criticism. He was accused of baptizing the General while he was in an unconscious state. On January 19, 1899, the bishop replied to the criticism:

I never baptized a dead man nor an unconscious person. When I baptized General Grant, he was not only conscious but thanked me for the service.<sup>13</sup>

The friendly relationship between the Newman family and the Grant family continued. In 1888, the General Conference met in New York. Now, Mrs. Grant, the wife of General Grant, resided in New York. She entertained the members of the General Conference in her home. It was the distinct privilege of J. P. Newman to introduce the guests to Mrs. Grant. He knew all conference members by name without the service of a prompter. This was another index to the genius of his leadership.

This General Conference conferred upon John Paul Newman the highest honor of the church. Although he was not a member of the General Conference, he was elected as the forty-first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was elected on May 24, 1888. He was elected on the 14th ballot with 320 votes. This was a hilarious moment for the Mississippi Circuit Riders. The Methodist Episcopal Church had honored the missionary work of one of its early home missionaries.

In his capacity as a bishop, J. P. Newman held the distinct honor of organizing the Mississippi Conference in 1891. While in Moss Point, he had the opportunity to renew fel-

lowship with some of the circuit riders who worked with him in the Mississippi Mission Conference. The next week, he presided over the Louisiana Conference.

On July 5, 1899, Bishop Newman closed his life's history in Saratoga, New York. He was buried in Mechanicsville, New York.

His friends always looked upon him as an independent and original thinker. He was by no means a product of his times. Instead, he helped greatly to fashion the times. He did not wait for a precedent, but always set precedents. His ministry in the Southwest is a good example. He was a man of fine equipoise of mind—one who could measure both the forces of menacing perils and the resources that could meet the danger.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Protests The Inequality in Railroad Accommodations**

In November, 1865, Mississippi placed upon its statute books, a law forbidding any railroad employee to permit any freedman, Negro or Mulatto to ride in any first class passenger cars set apart, or used by and for white people. The law did not apply to Negro nurses.

Because of this law largely, the Negroes were treated very inhumanely. In some cases, they paid first class fare but were forced to accept second class accommodations. Very often, they were required to ride in freight cars or even upon open platforms. Whenever Negroes protested, they were required to accept these accommodations by threat or even force.

In 1871, a conductor demanded that James D. Lynch would vacate a first class coach. He was at that time serving as the Secretary of the State. He was also the presiding elder of the Mississippi Conference. He moved politely. On another occasion, John R. Lynch was compelled to leave a

table set aside for whites only in the railroad dining room in Holly Springs, Mississippi. He was a Negro Senator from Adams County, Mississippi. He, too, retired without protest.

A catalogue of other grievances motivated the Conference to express its dissent in crystal clear language. On January 11, 1896, the Conference voiced its protest in the adoption of this resolution:

Whereas there exists on the statute books of this state, a law requiring railroad corporations in this state to provide equal and separate accommodations for the races, and

Whereas, there is not a railroad in the state that now complies with the said law by providing equal accommodations, having practically made none at all, on the contrary, forcing our people—our mothers, sisters, daughters and wives—to ride in compartment cars, where they are subject to the presence of vulgar men of both races and often times, penitentiary and county farm convicts in transportation . . . and Whereas this law will continue to be violated so long as we, as a race, silently suffer it, Therefore,

Be it resolved by the Upper Mississippi Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church in Grenada assembled, That we condemn the violation of this law by the companies of this State and deprecate and feel keenly the injustice . . . and therefore, we hereby, do appoint a committee of not less than three nor more than five to act in concert with similar committees appointed by other religious bodies of the State to memorialize the railroad commission of this state, asking that said law be enforced and we be accorded equal accommodations with other passengers paying the same fare.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that the Upper Mississippi Conference took action prior to the decision of the Supreme Court. On May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court rendered a decision on the Plessy vs Ferguson case. The court upheld the Louisiana law requiring segregated facilities as long as equality of accommodations existed. The Court held that segregation did

not constitute discrimination and the Negro was not deprived of equal protection under the 14th Amendment.

The Upper Mississippi Conference was demanding equal facilities although they were separate. The Conference members indicated their protest of being shortchanged.

### **Conference Frowns Upon The Practice Of Transferring Presiding Elders**

A custom prevailed in the Conference. It was the practice of bishops transferring men from one district to another. On the eve of the completion of their tenure on one district, the bishop would appoint them to another district. This practice kept men on the district indefinitely. It became objectionable to members of the Conference.

On February 7, 1887, J. L. Garrett offered the following resolution :

Resolved, That when a Presiding Elder has served his four years out as a presiding elder, he shall not change districts but cease to travel as presiding elder.<sup>15</sup>

The resolution produced an animated debate. Finally the Conference voted to table it.

The objection grew. In 1899, Richard Sewell presented a resolution condemning such practice. It lost by a tie vote.<sup>16</sup> On January 24, 1900, Sewell again presented the same resolution. It was approved this time by an overwhelming vote.<sup>17</sup> Its purpose was to indicate the sentiment of the conference to the bishop.

Although no name was mentioned, an examination of the appointments for the last two decades would indicate that it could have referred to Hiram Revels. Almost his entire ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church was spent as a Presiding Elder.

### **Taps For Dr. Hiram Rhodes Revels**

When the conference convened in St. Paul Church, Aberdeen, Mississippi on January 16, 1901, Dr. Revels answered the Roll Call for the last time. Standing on the conference floor, he was stricken while he was reading his report. His report was read by W. C. Clay.

Hiram Revels was a quadroon. He was born of free parents on September 27, 1827 in Fayetteville, North Carolina.<sup>18</sup> Here he received his early schooling. In pursuit of more knowledge, he migrated to Indiana, Ohio and Illinois. He completed his college training at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. He received further training at the Friend's Seminary in Liberty, Indiana.

He began his ministerial career in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. On August 25, 1842, he was admitted on trial in the Indiana Conference of this denomination. On August 31, 1849, he was ordained an elder in this conference.<sup>19</sup>

In 1875, he met the Mississippi Conference at Meridian, Mississippi. He was admitted on credentials into the conference. His first appointment was Asbury Church, Holly Springs, Mississippi.

The alumni of Alcorn College remember Dr. Revels as the founder of this Land Grant College. He served also as its first president. He had a difficult period at the college. His work was complicated by an unruly element in the faculty and student body.

In addition, Dr. Revels had an open conflict with Governor Ames. The feud resulted in the dismissal of Revels from the presidency in 1874. The dismissal of the president created revolt on the part of the student body. About sixty students withdrew from the school.

Although Revels had been a staunch Republican, he left the party and worked assiduously for the Democrats. He

was appointed for the second time as President of Alcorn College by Governor Stone. He remained here until his health failed.

Hiram Revels gained national recognition in the church and the political field. He served for a period on the Natchez City Council. He enjoyed the distinction of being the first Negro to become a United States Senator. He was elected by the Legislature on January 29, 1870, to fill the unexpired term of Jefferson Davis. The term expired on March 4, 1871. Revels was brought in as a dark horse. General Eggleston was the leading candidate at the beginning.

To the white supremacists, this was a world-shaking outrage. He was opposed violently. Finally the Senate voted to close debate. Revels won 48 to 8. He was sworn in Friday, February 25, 1870 at 4:40 p.m. Indeed it was an historic moment.

On Wednesday, May 24, 1876, Hiram Revels was elected as editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. The whole number of votes cast—301. Revels received 162 votes and was declared elected as the editor.<sup>20</sup> He was notified immediately of his election in his home at Holly Springs from the Baltimore Conference.

In speaking of his election, the *Christian Advocate*, September 21, 1876, page 300, reported:

He was elected without his consent or knowledge. He has carefully considered the situation and deliberately resigns the position but not the honor.

Earlier, the September 4th edition of the *Advocate* announced his resignation. The following is an excerpt from the letter of resignation:

\$2000 a year which was authorized to give the paper would not pay the additional expense of making it a weekly. It is evident to me that whoever edits and manages the paper must receive

his support from other sources, by conference appointment or otherwise. I am embarrassed financially and I felt that it would be wrong for me to accept editorship where further embarrassment seemed certain.<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Revels was highly respected among the white citizenry of the State. Wharton comments about this fact in the following statement: "So thoroughly did Revels gain the sympathy and encouragement of the white people that he soon lost the confidence of the masses of his own race."<sup>22</sup>

It is evident that Revels was misunderstood. The sincerity of his motive was questioned. Especially did many Negroes question him in his advocacy of the relaxation of the disabilities imposed upon the confederates. He advocated that Negroes and whites could live in harmony and mutual trust.

Despite the misunderstanding, Hiram Revels was a political statesman indeed. He was the most prestigious statesman of the Upper Mississippi Conference. The record reveals that he sponsored or co-sponsored all resolutions introduced in the conference for its well-being. However, the Conference never elected him to serve in a single General Conference during the 25 years of membership in the Conference.

His funeral was preached on January 17, 1901 at 1 p.m. at the seat of the Conference.

The following paid tributes to his work:

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| W. C. Clay        | Warren McDonald |
| L. F. White       | E. H. McKissack |
| S. H. Nevils      | J. M. Shumpert  |
| B. H. S. Ferguson |                 |

His body was carried to Holly Springs, Mississippi. It was laid to rest in the Hill Crest Cemetery on January 18, 1901. His wife, Phoebe Revels, died one month later—February 18, 1901.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PERIOD OF EXPANSION (1902 - 1919)

By 1902, the Upper Mississippi Conference had completed its first decade. The conference met that year in Revel's Memorial Church, Greenville, Mississippi. The church was named in honor of Dr. Hiram R. Revels.

The conference spent much time in stock taking. It took an inventory of its assets and liabilities. By 1902, the conference had 113 men in full connection and six probationers. The church membership had increased to 18,514. It reported 243 organized congregations. Due recognition was given to the organization of a second church in Columbus, Mississippi. It was organized with 18 full members.

The growth in church membership and number of pastoral charges increased the administrative responsibility of the presiding elders. In 1904, the conference created seven districts:

Aberdeen  
Clarksdale  
Greenville  
Greenwood

Holly Springs  
Starkville  
Tupelo

The conference was divided into seven districts for nine years. In 1913, the districts were reduced to six.

#### **The Conference Mourns The Passing of Its Organizer**

On January 2, 1908, the Upper Mississippi Conference paused in recognition of the passing of Bishop Edward Gayer Andrews. He died December 31, 1907 at Brooklyn, New York. In recognition of the meritorious services of this Octogenarian, the following resolution was adopted:

Whereas we have just learned with profound sorrow of the death of Bishop Edward G. Andrews, one of the Bishops of The Methodist Episcopal Church, therefore,

Be it resolved, That we receive this intelligence with profound sorrow, and that we extend to the Board of Bishops; our sense of the greater loss and to the bereaved family, our regret and that we now bow in Prayer in behalf of the church and the bereaved family.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden passing of Bishop Andrews deprived the church of a wealth of experience. He was graduated from Wesleyan University in 1847. He entered the Oneida Conference in 1848. This conference is no longer extant. The territory of this conference is now covered largely by the Central New York Conference. His first appointment was Cooperstown, New York. It was here that he developed an intimate friendship with James Fenimore Cooper. Later, he taught at his conference Seminary located at Cazenovia, New York.

In 1872, he was elevated to the episcopacy. He was elected on the third ballot with 236 votes. In 1880, he served as chairman of the Committee appointed to revise the ecclesiastical code of the church.

On his passing, many tributes were paid to him. Among the many, the following are cited:

Bishop Andrews was conspicuously great as an administrator. He had a perfect genius for doing things well. He died learning.

His episcopal colleagues spoke of him in these words:

Fresh, buoyant, unbroken until the last; a strong, ardent, noble preacher, a persuasive and convincing platform speaker, a wise and tactful administrator, unsurpassed in knowledge of the constitutional and legal history of the church.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Conference Reflects a Change in Attitude Toward The Election of Bishops for Special Groups**

From 1868 to 1908, the conference and its predecessors approved resolutions quadrennially urging the General Conference to elect a bishop of African descent. On January 4, 1908, the resolution to elect a bishop of races and language groups was voted down.

The mood had changed. The conference now advocates the election of a Negro to serve as a General Superintendent in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Now the conference felt that there were Negroes capable for leadership for the church. To advocate the election of a bishop of African descent to serve Negroes only was advocating a type of diocesan episcopacy. This type would destroy general superintendency.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Memorializes Bishop Charles B. Galloway**

On Sunday, January 9, 1910, the Upper Mississippi Conference paused for memorial services for Bishop Charles Betts Galloway, a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. This is the only time in the history of the conference where the conference memorialized a minister other than its own conference members or a bishop or a general officer of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The respect of the conference for Bishop Galloway paved the way for the unusual.

The following resolution was adopted by the conference:

Whereas, Through the Will of God, our own Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church South has fallen a victim to the ravishing hands of Death; and

Whereas, the Negroes of Mississippi and of this country have lost a great friend and defender of the rights of all men, regardless of race or color; and

Whereas, the Great State of Mississippi has lost the strong-

est defender of the cause of Prohibition and the cause of public education for all, therefore, be it

Resolved, That we bow in reverence to the will of our Heavenly Father and further,

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent by the Secretary of this conference to the family; also published in the minutes.<sup>3</sup>

Bishop Galloway was a native Mississippian. He was born on September 1, 1849 at Kosciusko, Mississippi. At an early age, his parents moved to Canton, Mississippi.

He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1868. He entered the ministry in the Mississippi Conference the same year. His first appointment was Sharon and a colored charge.

His rise to leadership was rapid but not more rapid than the unfolding of his abilities. After a brief period in the parish ministry he was elected editor of the New Orleans Advocate in 1882. In 1886, he was elected bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church South. This honor was bestowed upon him at the age of 37.

He never missed an opportunity to proclaim his belief in the education of the Negro. On April 26, 1904, he declared:

And we must insist that the Negro have equal opportunity with every American citizen to fulfill in himself the highest purposes of an all wise Providence.

On another occasion, he said:

Not in statutes or constitution—not in legislation, state or national—but in the school houses of the country is the great problem of American citizenship to find its final solution.

He died on May 12, 1909 at Jackson, Mississippi. He made a wonderful contribution to human relations in Mis-

issippi. He died too soon . . . He made four predictions in his book, "*Great Men and Great Movement*," which revealed his shortsightedness in the social movement in Mississippi. His advocacy of the education of the Negro was but preparing the Negro for his place in the sun.

On page 313, Bishop Galloway made the following assertions:

- (1) There will never be any social mingling of the races in the South.
- (2) They will worship in separate churches and be educated in separate schools.

He stated further:

"This is desired alike by both races and is for the good of each." <sup>4</sup>

- (3) The political power of this section will remain in present hands.
- (4) The great body of Negroes are here to stay.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Votes To Remain In The Church**

By now the Negro members of the Church found themselves in the horns of a dilemma. They had to choose between alternatives in the light of permanent values. The Negro must decide to remain in the Church or walk out. Three views were expressed:

First View: A minority group advocated withdrawal. A strong supporter of this view was Daniel W. Shaw of Washington Conference. He wrote a booklet: "Should the Negroes of the Methodist Episcopal Church Be Set Apart In The Church By Themselves?"

Shaw cites his view in the booklet. The following illustrates his view:

Now, I maintain that we are a hindrance to the white people as to organic union with the Church South, and the white people are a hindrance to us in the matter of growth and development, I am therefore prepared to ask the next General Conference to appoint a commission to draw up articles of Separation and to order a Plebiscite on the question of setting the Negroes apart by themselves with all their church and school property turned over to them in fee simple with an annual stipend of \$120,000 reducible at the rate of \$10,000 per quadrennium until the sum should be reduced to \$50,000 which sum should be permanent or reducible only on the motion of the recipient, or on a ratio as suggested above. The terms of the articles of Separation should be constituted as not to cut us off from either the sympathy or advice of the Great Church.<sup>5</sup>

This view was never too popular among Negroes. It found some support among white leaders. Shaw advanced four reasons for his view:

- (1) He doubted that a Negro would ever be elevated to the General Superintendency in The Methodist Episcopal Church.

He died prematurely to realize he was incorrect in his judgment. He died on September 25, 1914. In the 1920 General Conference, his belief was refuted.

- (2) The only way for union to occur between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South was to set the Negroes apart in a separate church.

In 1939, the two churches did unite but with a Central Jurisdiction.

- (3) Shaw held that Negroes would gladly withdraw providing that they had a guarantee of continuing support from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the form of permanent subvention.

Later in this study, this reason also will be refuted.

- (4) The lack of a Negro General Superintendent was responsible for the stunted membership growth among Negro churches. This reason can also be challenged. The Methodist Church has had Negro General Superintendents since 1920. The Negro membership in the Negro conferences in 1920 was 356, 657. In 1964, it was 373,595. Basic research is necessary to explain the growth. One casual factor cannot explain the growth.

Second View: Negro members should remain in the Methodist Episcopal Church. By for, this was the prevailing view. One of the supporters of this view was Sylvester H. Norwood. He wrote:

"We colored members in the Methodist Episcopal Church have an object in view—the securing of equal Christian rights where we are. The bishopric and all other positions are incidental to this principle."

According to Dr. J. H. Lovell, professor at Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, the Methodist Episcopal Church needed the Negro. The Church could not afford to have the Negroes withdraw from the Church. In support of his view, he wrote:

Again while it is everywhere acknowledged that the colored members have benefitted immeasurably by contact with their white brothers, is it not possible that the white men have also received something of benefit from his association with the colored man? <sup>6</sup>

*A third view* was expressed by J. P. Morris of the North Carolina Conference. It was entitled, "*The Ideal Methodism.*" He argued that the Methodist Episcopal Church should devise a strategy to include all branches of Methodism. The church would then be one church—The Ideal Methodist Church.

Against these conflicting views, the Upper Mississippi Conference expressed its sentiment. On January 20, 1912, the following resolution was presented to the conference by Dr. N. R. Clay:

Whereas, the question of colored members of the Methodist Episcopal Church to ask the General Conference of 1912 for a separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and,

Whereas, the question has been discussed *Pro* and *Con* through the press of the Church, thus throwing light to the extent that we are fully convinced that it is a very unwise step to take, thereby,

Be it resolved, That we, the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference do hereby reaffirm our allegiance to the old church and believe such a course to be very unwise and disastrous to the future spiritual and moral development of our people,

Resolved further, That we do hereby, along with other conferences of the church put our stamp of disapproval upon such a dangerous course.<sup>7</sup>

The Resolution was unanimously adopted by the conference. Other conferences expressed their sentiment as well. On January 11, 1912, the Mississippi Conference approved of a similar resolution.

### **The Area System Is Established In the Methodist Episcopal Church**

From the beginning of organized Methodism, all preachers including bishops were itinerant ministers. There had been a growing concern about the tenure of bishops for more than fifty years. On May 10, 1856, Edward Thomson, North Ohio Conference, presented a resolution to the General Conference requesting that the Committee on Revisals would inquire into the expediency of districting the work among bishops for four years so that the bishop would superintend

the same conferences for a quadrennium. No action was taken upon this resolution in the 1856 General Conference.<sup>8</sup>

In 1912, the Minneapolis General Conference approved the Area System for the General Superintendents. Prior to that time the bishop had charge of a conference for one calendar year. He, too, was appointed annually. The General Conference had established episcopal residences but no reference was made to conferences.

The Area System emerged largely out of the growing demands of the large cities. Cities required closer supervision and longer tenure. It was argued that bishops had been required to "scatter too much." The cry in 1912 was "not more bishops but more bishop."

It was an exception and not the rule when the same bishop held the same conferences two years in succession. From 1865 to 1912, there were 46 conference sessions. There were 30 bishops who presided over the conference during these years. The following bishops held the conference for three times or more:

Stephen M. Merrill  
William F. Mallalieu  
Edmund S. Janes  
Edward G. Andrews

Only the following bishops held the conference two years in succession: Levi Scott, Edmund S. Janes, William F. Mallalieu.

The Area System was a compromise. It was designed to continue the General Superintendency and at the same time, it proposed to develop a closer supervisional system.

In order to produce continuity of administration and program, the church was divided into episcopal areas for resident and presidential supervision.

The bishops were authorized to arrange conferences in

America in three divisions and to assign each bishop for presidential administration of conferences in the Division within which he had official residence.

The State of Mississippi was placed in the Central Division. The New Orleans Area was created. It included the following Negro conferences :

Central Alabama  
Louisiana  
Mississippi  
Upper Mississippi

The Gulf Conference included the white English, Italian and French speaking work in the State of Louisiana and also portion of Texas, not included in the Oklahoma Conference, was a part of the New Orleans Area.

The General Conference of 1912 elected Wilbur P. Thirkield on May 24, 1912. He was elected on the 26th ballot and received 557 votes. The Board of Bishops assigned the newly elected bishop to serve the New Orleans Area. He was assigned to this area for two quadrennia.

### **The Conference Sets An Age Limit For Conference Membership**

The conference established an age limit for admission into the conference. The increasing pension responsibility made it necessary to establish an age limit. On January 11, 1913, the conference established 35 years as the maximum age for admission into the Upper Mississippi Conference.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Mourns the Passing Of the Last of the Mississippi Pioneer Preachers**

From 1866 to 1915, the conference had a living witness of the Mississippi Mission Conference. He served as an historic link that connected the Upper Mississippi Conference with the Mississippi Mission Conference,

On December 15, 1915, the last veteran, Moses Adams, passed away. For almost a half century, he had worked in Mississippi. He was admitted into the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1866. He had served faithfully in the conference. He was an organizer. He organized Haven's Teachers College. He began the work in the Mississippi Delta. He was the organizer of several churches in the conference. He retired in 1897. After retirement, the conference conferred upon him the honor of being an evangelist at large.

He served many years as trustee of Rust College. He was a delegate to the 1876 General Conference. He was also a reserve to 1872 General Conference. In the absence of James D. Lynch, he was seated from May 1 to May 23, 1872 in this General Conference.

#### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Approves The Constitutional Amendment by a Slim Majority**

On May 29, 1912, the General Conference adopted the following resolution:

Proposition 1, Strike out from the Third Restrictive Rule, Paragraph 46, Section 3 of the Discipline all after the conjunctive 'but' and insert the words: 'may elect a bishop or bishops for work among particular races and languages, or for any of our foreign missions, limiting their episcopal Jurisdiction to the same respectively;

Resolved II, That should this report be adopted, the above amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted to the General Conference in order to ascertain whether the legal constitutional vote of two-thirds of the members shall be given;

Resolved III, That if such propositions shall be adopted by the General Conference, the bishop shall be requested to submit them to the members of the annual conferences which shall meet in the years of 1915 and 1916, the said propositions shall be voted on separately.<sup>10</sup>

The 1915 Mississippi Conference considered this constitutional amendment. W. W. Lucas presented it to the conference. J. M. Shumpert expressed dissent. A Roll Call vote was taken. It was approved on January 23, 1915 by a vote of 91 for and 21 against.

On January 14, 1916, the resolution was presented to the Upper Mississippi Conference. After an animated debate, the resolution lost by 55 for and 57 against. This vote was consistent with the action of 1908.<sup>11</sup>

On the next day, the conference voted reconsideration. The vote at this time was 58 for and 57 against. It was 18 votes short of two-thirds majority necessary for constitutional change.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Peak in Conference Membership**

When the Upper Mississippi Conference convened in the Mt. Pisgah Church, Okolona, Mississippi on January 13, 1916, it celebrated its Silver Jubilee as a distinct Annual Conference. It was a period of rejoicing over its numerical growth. For the first time in the history of the conference, it surpassed 25,000 in church members. This year, it reported 25,079 members. This is the highest membership report in the seventy-five years of the history of the conference.

### **The Boll Weevil and Migration**

Since 1879, Mississippi experienced its first major migration in 1916 and 1917. It was characterized by discontent with the old Plantation system, intensified by low wages and the damaging effects of the boll weevil. The boll weevil bankrupted the cotton economy.

Industries from the North took advantage of the social unrest among the Negroes. Agents were sent to Mississippi to recruit laborers. They made lucrative offers to these depressed persons. The offers were very conducive and impell-

ing to the Negroes who had not received a fair gain from the productive function of their labors.

In addition to these economic factors, there were social causes for the out-migration. Injustice in the courts, lynchings, denial of suffrage, discrimination in public conveyances and inequalities in the educational systems drove many Negroes to seek refuge elsewhere.

In his report to the 1916 Annual Conference, J. M. Marsh, the District Superintendent of the Aberdeen District, stated: "West Point, being one of the main gateways to the West, North, and Northwest, it has been for more than three months amazing and at times alarming, to see the vast multitudes of our people daily leaving our section of the country for the West, North and Northwest; the Judge of the Circuit Court of Clay County in his address to the Court drew out the fact that Clay County had lost in sixty days by emigration, 3,000 colored laborers . . . The spirit of opposition on the part of the landlords and authorities of the law against colored people leaving the country has been intense. Labor agents have been arrested and heavily fined in almost all the leading towns of the district." <sup>13</sup>

The out-migration had a negative effect upon the church membership. In one year, the conference lost 4,000 members. Yearly, the church membership continued to decline. By 1919, the church membership was 19,100.

CHAPTER VI  
THE FIRST NEGRO GENERAL SUPERIN-  
TENDENT MAKES GOOD  
(1920 - 1935)

FOR MORE than a half century, the Negroes of the Methodist Episcopal Church had sought to elect a General Superintendent of African descent. In 1920, the pursuit became a fact.

The 1920 General Conference convened in Des Moines, Iowa. It was indeed an epoch-making occasion. On May 3, 1920, W. W. Lucas, delegate from Mississippi, presented the following resolution:

Whereas, within the fold of the Methodist Episcopal Church, there are 350,000 members of African descent, and, Whereas, it is becoming increasingly difficult for our white bishops to adequately minister to these people because of conditions over which neither they nor we have control, and, Whereas, a great church like ours representing and containing various race groups owes every race group within its fold the most complete and efficient supervision in order to conserve the best interests of the Kingdom, therefore, Resolved, That we order a commission consisting of one minister and one layman from each episcopal area to be appointed by the bishops to inquire into the needs of this group from the eighty Negro delegates here from the colored conferences, the visitors here from the South, from our bishops who administer our colored conferences and all other available sources of information and report back to this General Conference not later than Friday of this week, their findings and make such recommendations as in their judgment will give some episcopal leadership of their own race.<sup>1</sup>

The resolution was signed by: W. W. Lucas, Mississippi; Ernest Lyons, Washington Conference; William McMorris of the North Carolina Conference.

In a masterful manner, Dr. Lucas supported the resolution in these words:

All his race wanted, was a chance to do a man's job, a chance to do a man's job in a man's way. Give us a chance to learn how to walk alone. We may yet teach you how to unite.<sup>2</sup>

The resolution was referred to the Episcopal Committee with instructions to report on an early date. On May 11, 1920, D. G. Downey, chairman of the Committee on Episcopacy and from the New York East Conference, made the following report:

"Your Committee recommends:

- (1) The election by this General Conference of two Negro General Superintendents;
- (2) That the Negro General Superintendents be elected on a separate ballot."

The recommendation was based upon the portion of the episcopal address regarding racial equality. The Episcopal address admonished the General Conference in these words:

We must not shut any door of hope in any face of any color.

In addition, the Chairman spoke:

It is time we redeem our pledges; It is time to stop resolving and get in the realm of achievement.

The motion to adopt the report was seconded by W. W. Lucas. In seconding the motion, Lucas remarked:

Take this and let the people of God know that while there are social distinctions and discriminations, yet at the altar of God we be brethren.

Under the previous question, the report was adopted as few reports have ever been adopted.<sup>3</sup>

On May 19, 1920, Robert Elijah Jones, North Carolina, was elected as General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was elected on the first ballot with 617 votes. Upon motion of R. B. McRary, a layman, North Carolina, Bishop-Elect Jones was escorted to the platform by Bishops McDowell and Thirkield.

On the next day, Matthew Wesley Clair, Sr. was elected as the second General Superintendent in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was elected on the third ballot with 569 votes. After Dr. Clair was elected, Scott Chinn led the conference in the singing "Beloved, We Are The Sons of God" and "Lord, I Want To Be A Christian."<sup>4</sup>

At long last the Methodist Episcopal Church redeems its promise. It gave the Negro members an opportunity to make good their pledge.

On May 25, 1920, Bishop R. E. Jones was assigned to the New Orleans Area. The New Orleans Area, then, was composed of all Negro conferences. New Orleans was established as the episcopal residence. The following conferences constituted the New Orleans Area:<sup>5</sup>

Central Alabama  
Louisiana  
Mississippi  
Texas and the West Texas Conference  
Upper Mississippi

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Claims the Honor of the First Negro Woman Licensed to Preach**

On May 26, 1920, the General Conference authorized that local license may be granted to women in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Upper Mississippi Conference

claims the distinct honor of the first conference to grant local license to a Negro lady.<sup>6</sup>

On June 12, 1920, Mrs. Mary E. Jones of Indianola, Mississippi, was licensed to preach by J. W. Golden, the District Superintendent of the Greenwood District. She was recommended by W. C. Conwell and the Indianola Quarterly Conference. She was ordained local deacon on January 3, 1926 at Amory, Mississippi.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Lord's Acre Plan**

Under the leadership of Dr. W. F. Isaiah of the Sardis District, the Lord's Acre Plan was started in the conference. On January 14, 1920, two laymen presented to the conference for the centenary the income from the Lord's Acre Projects. S. Holman, a layman on the Sardis District presented a check in the amount of \$212 as income from his Lord's Acre. Likewise, L. W. Washington, a layman, later a member of the conference presented his income from timber from an acre of land.<sup>8</sup>

### **The 1921 Annual Conference A Memorable Event**

On January 12, 1921, the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference convened at Mound Bayou, Mississippi in its 30th session.

It was indeed a history-making occasion. It was the first time that the conference had convened in an all Negro town. Mound Bayou was founded in 1887. It is located in Bolivar County. Its founder was Isaiah T. Montgomery, a wealthy Negro planter. He was the son of Benjamin T. Montgomery, the manager of the plantation for Jeff Davis.

It was the first time that a founder of a town had presented the "key" to the conference. It was the first time that a Negro mayor gave the welcome address. It was the

first time that the Methodist Conference had met in an African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Methodist Episcopal Church was under construction. It was Bishop Jones' first session of the Upper Mississippi Conference. It was a memorable event in the chronicles of Mississippi Methodism.

### **The Conference Becomes a Corporation**

Since 1891, the Upper Mississippi Conference was unincorporated. One of the first acts of Bishop Jones was to initiate plans to incorporate the conference. On January 13, 1921, the following committee was appointed: N. R. Clay; W. F. Isaiah; B. F. Woolfolk.

They were empowered to initiate plans to incorporate the conference. On January 14, 1922, the Upper Mississippi Conference became a corporation. The first trustees were:<sup>9</sup>

N. R. Clay  
B. F. Woolfolk  
W. F. Isaiah  
E. F. Scarborough  
W. N. Redmond, Sr.  
W. H. Golden  
G. M. Chisholm  
J. W. Golden  
F. H. Henry  
J. W. Winbush

### **Objectives for the Conference**

In his first Conference, Bishop Jones presented to the conference for approval the following long range and short range objectives:

- (1) Increased loyalty to God and The Church;
- (2) Re-kindling the evangelistic fires in the churches;
- (3) Stewardship and tithing
- (4) Education and life service
- (5) Recruitment for full time Christian work;
- (6) The total Centenary Program.

### Cathedral in The Mississippi Delta

Very early in the history of Mississippi, Methodism was at work in Greenwood, Mississippi. At first a place was reserved for colored worshipers in the "Union Church." In this church, all denominations of Greenwood worshipped.

In 1876, the second church building in Greenwood was that of the Colored Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. It was located on Washington Street between the present Paramount Theatre and the Elks' Club.

The Negro work was begun in Greenwood by the services of John Wesley and Renette Dunn. He had begun his ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church South. He joined the Mississippi Conference in January, 1869.

In 1870, he organized the first Methodist Church in Greenwood. The colored church was called "Wesley Chapel" for Uncle Wesley Dunn, its organizer.

On January 8, 1871, Ann O'Neal of Carroll County deeded to Wesley Dunn—lots 12, 13, 14, 15 in block 5 of the Howard part of Greenwood . . . for \$48.50 cash (Deed Book 6, page 307). Ann O'Neal had acquired the property from a sheriff's sale by Sheriff J. C. McKensie of Carroll County, on October 12, 1868 (Deed Book 6, page 151). It was the W. D. O'Neal property when she acquired it.

On November 11, 1878, Wesley Dunn deeded lot 12 and the South one half of lot 13 for the \$500 cash to J. W. Dunn, Jr., Willis Nero, Austin Stansell, Thomas McCain and Green McGregor, church trustees for the purpose of "maintaining it as a place of worship" (Deed Book 8, page 269).

The church remained on the lot on Washington Street until January 1, 1892. The lot was sold November 2, 1891 by the church trustees: Willis Nero; Stanford S. Brown; Osborne Everette; Peter Brumby; Green McGregor; Cary S. Jones; Henry H. Moore.

The new owner was S. H. Sellinger—cost: \$795.00. The building was reserved and moved by the first of the following year. In the meanwhile, the trustees purchased lots 1 and 4 in block 13 of the Henry addition from J. D. Attlesey for \$400 on August 8, 1891 (Deed Book 16, page 453). The frame church was moved to this spot. Here the church remained until it was destroyed by fire on January 4, 1920.

Under the leadership of Dr. H. B. Hart, the Wesley Church was rebuilt on Gibbs and Howard Streets. On July 31, 1922, the cornerstone was laid. On this festive occasion were Bishop R. E. Jones and M. S. Davage and the district superintendent present. It was completed at a cost of \$60,000.00. The Board of Church Extension contributed \$6,500 to the building program from the Reconstruction Fund.

It is an institutional church in the heart of the Delta. It has Sanctuary, Prayer room, gymnasium, class rooms, offices and swimming pool. It must be credited to the arduous labors of Dr. H. B. Hart. He had a vision that came true. The church was dedicated in 1946 during the pastorate of M. J. Stallings.

It became the "Mecca for Mississippi Methodism."

### **The Dyer-Anti Lynch Bill Endorsed**

Lynching was a growing menace to the Negro population of Mississippi. It had the highest incidence of lynchings for the nation. From 1918, to 1922, 290 Negroes were lynched in Mississippi.

Due credit must be given to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for its leadership against bigotry and injustice in America. Its secretary, James Weldon Johnson, was successful in 1921 in securing the leadership of Representative L. C. Dyer of Missouri in introducing a Bill in the House. Its purpose was "to assure to persons within the Jurisdiction of every state the equal

protection of the laws and to punish the crime of lynching.”

The conference endorsed Dyer's Anti Lynch Bill on January 14, 1922 by adopting the following resolution :

We, the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference in annual session assembled representing a constituency of 50,000 Negroes, respectfully record our appreciation of your endeavors in the interest of law and order, and do earnestly petition the House and Senate, therefore, praying that they pass the Dyer's Anti-Lynch Bill in behalf of humanity.

A copy of this resolution was ordered sent to Representative Dyer.<sup>10</sup>

### **An Institution—The Fulfillment of a Dream**

Soon after Bishop Jones was elected to the episcopacy, he was invited to Lakeside as a guest speaker. This institution started the episcopal leader daydreaming: “Could we not develop a similar project in the New Orleans Area for our people?” asked the day dreamer. At once, Bishop Jones began the quest for a spot to develop such an enterprise for his people.

In his episcopal report for 1924 General Conference, Bishop Jones records the following statement :

The purchase of a site on the Gulf of Mexico at Waveland, Mississippi and the establishment of the Gulfside Chautauqua and Camp meeting ground for our people in the South has met a long felt need.<sup>11</sup>

He continued : “The Gulfside Association has in fee simple and in lease a shore line of over one mile, the property consisting of 700 acres of land. Most of which is high and dry. The site is only 48 miles removed from New Orleans with a railroad station within 1,500 feet of the property from which there are six trains each way daily with addition-

al trains only 4 miles removed at Bay St. Louis. Included on the property is an adequate hotel, the old historic Jackson House built by the nephew of President Andrew Jackson."

On January 12, 1924, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted unanimously to support the Gulfside Assembly. The following year, the conference endorsed the Rural (Pastors) School as a continuing education program for the conference members. It also approved of the Pastors' school for the undergraduates. During the winter months, a school was conducted for boys who had been culturally deprived. Several boys got a new lease on life through the "Poor Boy's School" at Gulfside.

Several alumni of the school have served effectively in the ministry of the church.

Gulfside soon became the Chautauqua for Negro Methodists. Training opportunities were also provided for laymen. It became the "Haven for the people of the New Orleans Area."

### **The Longest Tenure For a Minister in the Conference**

Prior to 1900, this fact could not be highlighted. In that year, the General Conference lifted the ban on the limit of tenure in a particular parish. All time limits were removed.

One causal factor in this action was urbanization. Although the Upper Mississippi Conference was a predominantly rural conference, it benefitted therefrom.

The distinct honor goes to Donaldson Green. He had the longest pastorate in the same charge of any member in the history of the conference. In 1905, he was appointed by Bishop Henry Spellmeyer to the Weir Charge. He served this charge for twenty-one years.

In addition to this honor, Donaldson Green has, to date, the longest record in the effective relationship. He was ad-

mitted in the Mississippi Conference in 1886. He retired in 1941. He served in the effective relation for 55 years. He died in 1950.

Special mention must be made of M. L. Ross. He was assigned to the Macon Circuit by Bishop R. E. Jones in 1930. He remained in this parish for 15 years.

### 1927 Flood

The people who lived in the Mississippi Delta in 1927 will long remember the disastrous effect of the flood in the spring. In fact, for the senior citizens, it serves as a mnemonic device. They tend to remember the birthday of their children and grandchildren by the date of the flood. It was indeed a natural disaster. Any situation becomes such when man is victimized by the forces that under normal conditions can be controlled.

This disaster caused a sudden disruption of the daily patterns of living. Families were dislocated. Some people suffered personal injuries as well as wholesale destruction of personal property. The Greenville, the Clarksdale and the greater portion of the Greenwood District were under water for a long period of time. All Delta towns, not covered by water, were overcrowded by refugees.

In speaking of the calamitous effect of the flood, Dr. W. A. C. Hughes, the Secretary of the Department of Negro Work said :

It will take a long time for the people living in Arkansas and Mississippi Delta to recover from the tremendous losses they sustained in the Mississippi flood a year ago.

It was reported that one half of the vast area that went under water was bankrupt with no crops and for months afterwards more than 60,000 people were dependent upon the Red Cross.

The Clarksdale District Superintendent, C. W. Butler, reported to the 1928 Conference session :

This has been a very hard year for the first four months, church work was almost at a standstill on the account of the incessant rain, high water, back water, and finally overflow almost covered the entire Delta Country in which the Coahoma Church was lost. Three other churches were shut up for four months, on account of the back water. Notwithstanding this state of affairs, each pastor has stood at his post.<sup>12</sup>

Another superintendent reported :

Three-fourths of the territory of this district was in the flooded area.<sup>13</sup>

The Mission Board of the Church came to the rescue of these people in the flood-stricken area. In addition to supplying immediate financial assistance a special appeal was made for additional help. On June 2, 1927, churches throughout Methodism responded to the appeal. Gifts for emergency relief amounted to \$16,362.01.

The disaster had an appalling effect upon the church life of the Delta area. Many churches were closed for four or five months; church members moved out and did not return. The disciplinary benevolences were reduced by two-thirds of the previous year's receipts. The ministers received less than sixty per cent of their estimated salaries. The church membership was reduced by 439 members.

### **Two Annual Conference Sessions In The Same Calendar Year**

In 1921, the Upper Mississippi Conference sent a petition to the Board of Bishops requesting a change in the time of the Annual Conference from spring to fall. The confer-

ence suggested that the preferable time would be the first or second week in December. This request was based upon two factors:

- (1) Settling time for agricultural workers was around this period. It would enable the churches to complete their benevolence budget without extreme difficulty;
- (2) The weather was usually more favorable during this period than in January or February. Conference members had bitter memories of the 1918 Conference session. It was held at Clarksdale, Mississippi. Because of a shortage of fuel in the city, it was the shortest session of the conference. As a result of the unbearable conditions, many members became victims of influenza.

In 1928, the Board of Bishops changed the Upper Mississippi Conference from spring to fall. In order to effect the change, it was necessary to have two conference sessions. The first session was held at Vincent Chapel, Grenada, Mississippi, February 8 to 12, 1928. The second session was held at the Wesley Church, Kosciusko, Mississippi, December 5 to 9, 1928.

### **Two Native Sons Return Home**

The Upper Mississippi Conference rejoiced to have two native sons to return to the conference. On December 12, 1929, L. M. McCoy transferred from the Southwest Conference. Already, he was serving as President of Rust College. In addition, he served his conference as its treasurer until his retirement in 1955.

In 1933, A. P. Shaw transferred from the Southern California Conference. He had been elected as editor of the Southwestern Christian Advocate. He remained in the conference until his election to the episcopacy.

### No Central Conference For The Upper Mississippi Conference

The 1928 General Conference authorized a constitutional amendment. It was an amendment to the Third Restrictive Rule. When amended, it read: "The General Conference shall not change nor alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with the Episcopacy. Nor destroy the plan of our itinerant General Superintendency but may elect a missionary bishop or superintendent for any of our foreign missions limiting his episcopal jurisdiction to the same."

On January 2, 1930, the bishops notified the Church of the vote on the Constitutional Amendment. The change granted Central Conferences the power to elect bishops. The Annual Conference vote: For—10,914; Against—340. Lay Electoral Conference vote: For—7,576; Against—164.

After the Central Conferences were authorized to elect bishops, sentiment grew in Methodist circles that this may be a way out for the Church with other minority groups. If the Negro group would agree to a Central Conference, union between Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church South could be more easily accomplished.

On April 11, 1929, I. Garland Penn wrote an article in the *Christian Advocate*, entitled: "*The Negro and Central Conferences*." He emphasized the fact that Central Conferences *may* elect bishops "upon their request." He amended the proposition to allay fear. Still there was suspicion.

The Lay Electoral Conference of the Washington Conference in session in Baltimore, Maryland, March 22, 1929, gave an explanatory note on its votes on the Proposition. Sixty-eight voted in favor of the Constitutional Amendment and 37 did not approve it.<sup>14</sup>

The supporters of the Proposition explained that they were cooperating with conferences in foreign fields. However,

they were aware of the fact that the Central Conference applied to the whole Church. Hence the laymen of the Washington Conference expressed in no uncertain terms that they did not favor a Central conference for the Negroes in the United States.

The Upper Mississippi Conference had misgivings about the matter. The triad—J. W. Golden, J. M. Marsh, and E. F. Scarborough—presented the following resolution to the conference on December 5, 1931:

Whereas, we have no authority to speak for others, but we can see nothing to be derived from a Central conference for our group, therefore,

Be it resolved, That, we, the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference do oppose any and every effort from whatever source to set aside our group into a Central conference now or hereafter.<sup>15</sup>

The resolution was adopted unanimously.

### **The 1932 Conference Session**

On November 30, 1932, the Upper Mississippi Conference convened in the Wesley Church at Mound Bayou, Mississippi. This was the second time that the conference was held in this all Negro town in twelve years. The first session was presided over by Bishop Robert E. Jones, the first Negro elected as a General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This session of the conference was presided over by Bishop M. W. Clair, Sr., the second Negro to be elected to the General Superintendency of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Few now living will soon forget this conference session. For the writer and Daniel Timothy Jackson, they will remember it because they were admitted into the Upper Mississippi Conference on trial on December 2, 1932. Neither

will Benjamin Franklin Harper forget. He was admitted into full connection. Those who were in attendance will remember the resolution presented by Frank J. Talbert recommending the reduction of districts from six to four and the animated debate which followed. However, when the question was called it was voted unanimously. It was a history-making conference also, in that more men transferred into the Conference than in any other year of the history of the Conference. Five men transferred to the Upper Mississippi Conference in 1932.

How could one forget Sunday, December 4, 1932! On that day, Bishop Clair stirred his audience as he preached from Psalms 84:11:

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.

After his message, he asked question 38: "Where are the preachers stationed?" Under the authority imposed upon him, by the church, he answered the question by reading the appointments for 1933. He restored the Upper Mississippi Conference to the itinerant system. It was evidenced in the changes in appointments. Out of the 93 pastoral appointments, fifty-eight changes were made at that Conference. More changes were made at this Conference than at any previous year of the Conference history. The reminder of the Mound Bayou Conference always excites anxiety among the veterans even to this day.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION (1936 - 1944)

DURING THIS PERIOD the Upper Mississippi Conference likened unto other Methodist conferences, underwent a process of change. The conference changed from a conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to a conference of The Methodist Church. It evidenced change in episcopal leadership also.

From 1920 to 1936, it had been under the leadership of the first Negro General Superintendent. In 1936, the General Conference assigned A. P. Shaw to the New Orleans Area.

On May 14, 1936, Alexander Preston Shaw was elected to the episcopacy. He was elected on the fifth ballot with 462 votes. He was the third Negro General Superintendent elected. He was the last Negro elected by a General Conference.

Included among the conferences of the New Orleans Area was the Upper Mississippi Conference. Prior to the General Conference, Bishop Shaw was a member of the Upper Mississippi Conference. He was a reserve delegate from the conference. Hence, he left as a member and returned as the resident bishop—A Native Son shall lead them.

He was no novice in church administration. With the exception of five years, his entire ministry had been spent in the pastorate. He began his ministry in the Washington Conference in 1906.

In 1931, he was elected editor of the Southwestern Christian Advocate. In his editorial position, he travelled even the remote places of the New Orleans Area. His intimate

knowledge of the New Orleans Area equipped him for the new role assigned to him.

### **The 1936 Conference Session**

On December 2, 1936, Bishop A. P. Shaw convened the 46th session of the Upper Mississippi Conference in Mount Pisgah Church, Okolona, Mississippi. It was an epoch making occasion. It was the first conference session presided over by the native son. This conference had to consider the issue of unification. An order of the day was established for its consideration. Its consideration produced the most spirited debate in the history of the conference. The bone of contention was that the Central Jurisdiction was racial in character. All other jurisdictions were regional. The opponents could not justify segregation being written in the constitution of the Church. They voiced a strong and cogent protest.

On January 8, 1925, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted in favor of the union of two branches of Methodism. It voted 90 for and four against. On December 4, 1936, the conference reversed its action. The conference voted by orders. The laymen voted unanimously to support union. The ministers were divided: 30 for and 39 against. The conference did not approve the document by a two-thirds majority, necessary for adoption.<sup>1</sup>

### **Another Native Son Returns**

On December 5, 1936, Charles A. Talbert transferred to the Upper Mississippi Conference from the Louisiana Conference. He had been admitted on trial in the conference in 1927. After graduation from seminary, he served a pastorate in the Louisiana Conference. In the spring of 1936, he was elected as professor of church history in Gammon Seminary. In this capacity, he served for twelve years. In 1951, he transferred to the Lexington Conference.

### **The Conference Approved Of the Retention of a District Superintendent**

On May 12, 1936, the Committee on Itineracy recommended to the General Conference the following: "When a District Superintendent shall have served for a consecutive period of six years in any conference and the bishop recognizes a definite need for his continuance, he may be continued for a period not more than two years with the approval of the United Session of the Annual and Lay Conference expressed by ballot without discussion."

Two reasons cited for this amendment:

- (1) Man's time in the district terminates very often at the time when he is needed most. It may be some type of campaign already in progress;
- (2) Occasionally, a bishop has difficulty in finding a replacement for a district superintendent at the end of six years. Two years later, adjustments can more easily be made.

During the period of transition, Bishop Shaw recognized the invaluable services of Edward F. Scarborough. He recommended to the conference that he would be continued on the district. On December 4, 1936, the conference voted in favor of his continuance upon the district. The vote was 67 for over 31 against. He was retained by a two-thirds majority.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Conference Takes Action Regarding Debt-Ridden Churches**

The Depression left several of the churches in the conference financially unable to meet the mortgages. The conference voted to participate in the debt cancellation program. Included in the program were Mount Moriah Church, Corinth, Mississippi, Griffin Church, Starkville, Mississippi, St. James Church, Amory, Mississippi and the Wesley

Church at Greenwood, Mississippi. The financial lift from the other churches of the conference enabled all of the churches to become debt free in a very short period.

### **The Last Session of the Upper Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church**

On November 14, 1939, the Upper Mississippi Conference convened in the Mount Moriah Church, Corinth, Mississippi for its last session of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was also the last session over which Bishop Shaw presided.

Its last act before adjourning as a conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was to admit R. W. Wiggins on trial.<sup>3</sup> He has the distinction of being the last man to be admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

By formal vote, the conference adjourned sine die. It reconvened as a conference of the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church.<sup>4</sup>

The conference began in The Methodist Church with 22,483 full members and 227 churches. It had 92 full conference members and 10 probationers.

### **The Conference Elects Delegates To the 1940 General and Jurisdictional Conferences**

Under the new constitution, a new type of conference was created in Methodism. It was the Jurisdictional Conference. By vote of the conference, L. M. McCoy, president of Rust College, was elected ministerial delegate to the General Conference and R. E. Hunt, Columbus, Mississippi, was chosen as the lay delegate. The ministerial delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference were E. F. Scarborough and M. J. Stalling. Lillian P. Rogers and P. W. Tucker were elected as lay delegates.

### **The First Central Jurisdiction Conference**

The first Central Jurisdiction Conference convened at Union Memorial Church, St. Louis, Missouri on June 20, 1940. This conference elected W. A. C. Hughes from the Washington Conference and L. H. King, New York Conference, to the episcopacy.

The conference assigned W. A. C. Hughes to the New Orleans Area. Included in his area were Central Alabama Conference, Louisiana, Texas Conference, Upper Mississippi Conference and the West Texas Conference.

The ministry of W. A. C. Hughes in the episcopacy was the shortest recorded in the history of American Methodism. He was elected on June 20, 1940 on the second ballot with 81 votes. He died on July 12, 1940. The next bishop with a short tenure was Henry Biddleman Bascom. On May 12, 1850, he was elected by the Methodist Episcopal Church South. He was also elected on the second ballot with 59 votes. He was privileged to hold one annual conference. He presided over the St. Louis Conference at Independence, Missouri on July 10, 1850.<sup>5</sup> He died on September 8, 1950.

The College of Bishops assigned Bishop R. E. Jones to the New Orleans Area for the remainder of the quadrennium.

### **The Golden Anniversary Of the Upper Mississippi Conference**

Assembled at the St. James Church, Amory, Mississippi on November 13, 1940, were the members of the Upper Mississippi Conference in celebration of the Golden Anniversary of the Upper Mississippi Conference.

The presiding Bishop R. E. Jones led the conference in singing, "And Are We Yet Alive." This song had real meaning for some of those present. Three members, Donaldson Green, J. M. Walton and W. H. Golden were also in the organizational session in 1891. C. W. Butler, the pastor, was

there in spirit also. He was confined to his bed. He was the last of the men then living admitted on trial fifty years earlier. He died November 28, 1940.

Due recognition was given to the beginning of the Upper Mississippi Conference. The conference thanked God for the past. The celebration closed by singing the Negro National Hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

The conference approved a resolution to participate in the 75th Anniversary Celebration with the other conferences of the New Orleans Area. The entire celebration was to be held at Wesley Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, December 25 to 29, 1940.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Votes Upon a Constitutional Amendment**

On November 14, 1946, the conference voted upon an amendment to the constitution. It voted to amend Paragraph 35, Article II of the 1939 Discipline of The Methodist Church which was as follows:

The bishop shall be elected by the respective Jurisdictions and Central conferences and ordained or consecrated in the historic manner of episcopal Methodism at such time and place as may be fixed by the General Conference.

It was amended by striking out the words "ordained or."

The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1934, introduced a memorial harmonizing its Discipline by using only the word "consecrate" and omitting the word "ordained" as pertaining to bishops.

At the uniting conference, it came back unto the Discipline. It was not in either the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church nor the Methodist Episcopal Church South. Neither was it in the Methodist Protestant Discipline. It raised an important theological question on Methodism:

Do we recognize two or three Orders? Mr. Wesley held that bishop and elder were of the same Order. Hence there were only two Orders. Another point is that "consecration" and "ordination" are not synonymous terms. If they were, we could speak of ordination of deaconesses as well. Ordination means initiation into an Order.

The General Conference approved the constitutional amendment on May 2, 1940 by 675 for and none against.

The Upper Mississippi Conference approved the amendment by 89 for and none against.<sup>7</sup>

### Compulsory Retirement

In Paragraph 231, 1940, the Discipline stated: "Every Clerical member of an annual conference, whose seventy-second birthday precedes the first day of the regular session of his annual conference, shall automatically be retired from the active ministry at said conference session. This action is to become effective with the annual conference of 1942."

This legislation was referred to The Judicial Council for its constitutionality. On May 5, 1940, The Judicial Council ruled: "The legislation enacted by the 1940 General Conference providing for automatic retirement of Clerical members of annual conferences whose seventy-second birthday precedes the first day of the regular session of the annual conference is constitutional." This legislation must be upheld unless it is clearly in conflict with the constitution interpreted as a whole. The matter of uniform regulations for retirement of ministers is a connectional matter, and, as such, it is a subject over which the General Conference, under the constitution, has legislative power.

On November 13, 1942, W. H. Golden, P. A. Lemon and M. C. Pulliam were retired automatically due to the age limit.<sup>8</sup> They were the first to retire under the new legislation.

### **Conference Votes to Merge**

#### **With the Memphis District of the Tennessee Conference**

On November 19, 1943, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted to request the Central Jurisdictional Conference to permit it to merge with the Memphis District of the Tennessee Conference.<sup>8</sup>

Memphis was now the major trade area of surrounding counties in Mississippi. These counties were a part of the Metropolitan Area. In addition, many Mississippians had migrated to Memphis in pursuit of work. This was especially true of the dispossessed people from the Mississippi Delta.

A similar resolution was approved by the Tennessee Conference on October 23, 1943. The remainder of the Tennessee Conference was to merge with the East Tennessee Conference.

The Central Jurisdictional Conference on June 10, 1944, approved the following:

The Jurisdictional Conference granted an enabling act permitting the Tennessee Conference to merge with the East Tennessee Conference; also permitted the Upper Mississippi Conference to include the boundaries of the work west of the Tennessee River, including Clifton and Waynesboro, east of the said river. This enabling act permitted the three conferences to proceed according to the requirement of the Discipline.<sup>9</sup>

No further action was taken.

### **The Election of Robert Nathan Brooks**

On June 9, 1944, the Central Jurisdictional Conference elected Robert N. Brooks to the episcopacy. He was elected on ballot number three with 82 votes.<sup>10</sup> On the next day, he was assigned residential and presidential supervision of the New Orleans Area.

Bishop Brooks was a native North Carolinian. He was

born on May 8, 1888 at Hollis, North Carolina. He was awarded the baccalaureate degree at Bennett College. On the same campus he received the highest honor of the church. In 1914, he graduated from Gammon Seminary. Later he was awarded the Master of Arts degree from Northwestern University. He was privileged to do further study at Oxford University.

He earned his education the hard way. While a student, he served as a bellboy and an amateur horticulturalist.

He came into the episcopacy with many varieties of experiences. He served in the pastorate in the North Carolina Conference. He served as the field secretary of the Board of Sunday Schools. He served as the president of the following colleges: Haven's Teachers College and Sam Houston College and Central Alabama College. For ten years (1926 to 1936), he taught Church History at Gammon Theological Seminary. In 1936, he was elected editor of the Southwestern Christian Advocate. Hence he came to the New Orleans Area with the full awareness of the needs, resources and opportunities for the Area.

### **The World War II**

The Upper Mississippi Conference was affected by the general conflict during the forties. Many young men were called into the armed forces and because of this fact, many families followed them. As a result, the membership rolls of many churches were reduced.

The Upper Mississippi Conference, in addition to sharing of its manpower, contributed three ministers to the chaplaincy. Frank A. Blackwell left Oxford Charge and served 10 years as a chaplain. Ernest L. Harrison left Ripley Charge to enlist as a chaplain in the Army. The Dean of Rust College, Ellsworth Harris, served a short period in the chaplaincy as well.

## CHAPTER VIII

### **"TRYING TO MAKE A HUNDRED" (1945 - 1965)**

IN 1938, under the presidency of Bishop A. P. Shaw, the Upper Mississippi Conference adopted as its theme song, "Trying To Make A Hundred; Ninety-Nine And A Half Won't Do."

The motion was made by H. H. Williams. The theme song had reference to raising the benevolence and conference budget in full. Later, the theme song had an added significance. As the conference came near to the hundred-year stretch of the Methodist work in Mississippi, it became determined to reach the centennial year with a record of success.

#### **The Crusade For Christ**

The 1944 General Conference adopted as its quadrennial program, "The Crusade for Christ." It was the answer of Methodism to the unprecedented needs of the world. The financial goal for "The Crusade for Christ" was \$25,000,000 for relief, reconstruction and service to a post world war.<sup>1</sup> This was in addition to the regular benevolence budget of the church.

The New Orleans Area had an apportionment of \$227,000. The share of the Upper Mississippi Conference for the Crusade for Christ was \$37,000.

The conference pledged in its annual session of 1944 to raise the entire amount and more. Easter Sunday was designated as Victory Day. It voted an adjourned session for Victory Day.

On April 10, 1945, the Upper Mississippi Conference convened at Asbury Church, Holly Springs, Mississippi. It was

Victory Day *plus* for the conference. Under the benign personality and gentle leadership of Bishop Robert N. Brooks, the New Orleans Area led the Methodist Church in reporting its apportionment in full.

As Wesley said of an English preacher: "For such times, God made such men." This expression may be made of Bishop Brooks.

The Christian Advocate, April 26, 1945, page 484, had an article entitled, "First To Pay Cash." These words are quoted from the article:

The office of Crusade for Christ advises that the New Orleans Area of the Central Jurisdiction has paid its quota in full in cash, and, by that achievement, has won the distinction of being the first area in Methodism to reach its goal. More is yet to be received. To Bishop Robert N. Brooks and his loyal people, sincere congratulations.<sup>2</sup>

The first annual conference in Methodism to pay its quota in full was the West Texas Conference of the New Orleans Area.

### **The Work of An Agricultural Missionary**

The Upper Mississippi Conference is predominantly a rural conference. Most of its churches are located in small towns and open country. Only four churches were located in cities of 10,000 or more in 1945.

The Conference Board of Missions, working in cooperation with the Department of Negro Work of The Board of Missions, sought to serve the people in Town and Country more adequately.

On September 1, 1946, C. G. Randle was employed as an agricultural missionary. By training and experience, he came to the new job well prepared. He was a graduate of Hampton

Institute. Already he had served as an agricultural extension worker in Arkansas for seven years.

He was employed to work with pastors and laymen in redeeming the rural areas of Mississippi. Emphases were placed upon farm management and finance, crops, production, livestock, and poultry practice as well as food production. He trained the farmers and ministers through institutes and workshops. He worked closely with the district superintendents of the conference.

The following statement was made of his accomplishments:

Under his influence, farm building and farm equipment have been repaired, new buildings erected, and better canning methods used.

The report further stated:

As a result of missionary aid in the State of Mississippi, farmers have been guided in the purchasing and breeding of livestock for home consumption and market.

Mississippi farmers have been led to see the relationship of the Christian Church to life at the grass root level.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tidal Wave Strikes Gulfside**

In September, 1947, Gulfside Assembly was struck by a tidal wave. Its property was damaged severely. For those of “little faith” it was the end of Gulfside.

But an episcopal leader “had come to the Kingdom for such a time as this.” This intrepid leader, Robert N. Brooks, sent out a message to the conference leaders immediately. He urged a campaign for financial aid to rebuild Gulfside. He admonished his discouraged followers that “the disaster may have been a ‘blessing in disguise.’ It creates an opportunity to build a new Gulfside. This we will do.”

In the *Gulfside Visitor*, May, 1950, F. W. Mueller, a special worker for Gulfside, described a "thrilling transmutation." He said, "After the tidal wave had wrought its havoc in the Autumn of 1947, I stood with some friends on the shore of Gulfcoast where the building of Gulfside Assembly had for several decades marked the spot. The physical plant was a shambles. One got the impression that the institution had come to the edge of the evening with only the night beyond. One man said to me: 'The lights had gone out and we are ready for taps!' I quickly answered there might be yet a reveille." <sup>4</sup>

In a short period, one could see a thrilling transmutation. Three permanent buildings were soon erected; the first was Robert Jones Administration Building. It was named in honor of the founder. It housed all administration offices, a small chapel, library, and a Room of Remembrance. The Brooks Chapel was the second on the list of permanent structures. It was named in honor of the resident bishop at the time of construction. The Longmore Inn is the hotel. It has spacious and modern accommodations for the guests and attached thereto is the dining room. The fourth permanent building is the Assembly Hall. It has adequate seating capacity to accommodate large gatherings.

All these buildings were only a partial fulfillment of the day dreamer, Robert Brooks. At the time of death, he was planning for more buildings for Gulfside.

### **The Conference Votes To Change From Fall Conference To Spring Conference**

Few people now living will soon forget the conference at Wesley Church, Greenwood, Mississippi in 1948. No issue had generated more animated debate in recent history than the changing of the conference from fall to spring.

The season had become a time honored custom. For many

it was sacrosanct. Twenty years earlier, the conference had changed from spring to fall.

When D. T. Jackson presented the resolution to the conference, it aroused ire from ministers and laymen alike. Ample time was granted for full debate. The following reasons were cited for the change:

- (1) To change it will bring the conference into conformity with the fiscal year of the General Church;
- (2) If all conferences would change to spring, it would be only necessary to publish one General Minutes. Previously, General Minutes were published for fall conferences and spring conferences;
- (3) Since moving ministers was involved, it would be better to move in spring than fall. It would not disrupt the schooling of children;
- (4) The weather is better for conference in spring than fall;
- (5) Wives were employed as co-bread winners. Many wives were teachers. They could move more easily in the spring than fall.

On November 13, 1948, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted by a two-thirds majority to support the resolution.<sup>5</sup> The decision of the Upper Mississippi Conference to change from fall to spring had a chain reaction.

All conferences of the Central Jurisdiction voted accordingly. By 1961, all Central Jurisdictional Conferences had changed. Now all conferences in the United States are spring conferences.

### **A New Church in the Upper Mississippi Conference**

Outstanding among the 1950 achievements of the conference was the beginning of a new congregation in Greenwood, Mississippi. Greenwood was one of the flourishing Delta towns. People were moving into Greenwood from Delta

plantations. Many Negro families had been displaced and very often they were dispossessed. They had come here for a livelihood.

The Wesley Church tried diligently to recruit these members. They refused in main to unite with the Church. "It is too big!" This was the constant reply of these uprooted people.

The Reverend Amos O. Holmes, the unselfish pastor of Wesley Church, set out to recruit these people for the Methodist Church by organizing a second church in Greenwood. He put forth every effort toward this new endeavor.

He received the full support and guidance of his District Superintendent, C. T. Allen, and the episcopal backing of his Bishop. The Conference Board of Missions endorsed the new project.

The lots were purchased. An army chapel was bought and placed on the lot. The total cost of the project was \$9,500. The General Board of Missions contributed \$2,000 as a donation. It made a loan to the project in the amount of \$2,500. The loan was paid on June 7, 1960. It received \$5,000 from the "million from the Master" Fund.

This was a financial program initiated by Bishop J. Lloyd Decell for the Jackson Area. Included in this program was aid to assist the Negro churches in Mississippi. It is possible that the late bishop conceived his title from the slogan coined by C. C. McCabe. In 1884, McCabe introduced the slogan: "Million for Missions."

Because of his intense interest in the rebuilding and renovating of Negro churches in Mississippi, the church was named in memory of the late bishop.

In August 1950, the Decell Methodist Church was opened with seven charter members. Other events, heralding success were only less important than the starting of this new congregation. It was the only new congregation started

in the conference in 30 years. It brought new life to the conference. It was, indeed, a healthy transfusion for the conference.

### **The Conference Sets a New Age Limit for Conference Membership**

By the law of The Methodist Church, the General Conference sets the age of retirement for all ministerial members. The Annual Conferences are still permitted to establish the age by which it will admit ministers into its membership.

In 1913, the conference established the maximum age of conference membership at 35. On May 29, 1953, the Upper Mississippi Conference, by a two-thirds majority, rescinded the action. In lieu of the 1913 law, it approved of Rule 23 in the By-laws of the conference:

No person shall be admitted to the Annual Conference who has reached the age of 45 or will reach the age of 45 during the calendar year. This rule may be suspended at any time by a two-thirds vote of the conference if conditions warrant it.<sup>6</sup>

The change in rule was perhaps due to the ministerial shortage of the conference members. In 1913, the conference had a ministerial supply of 149 men; by 1953, the ministerial supply had declined to 86.

### **Death Claimed Bishop Robert N. Brooks**

“A Prince has fallen in Israel.” This was the echo of many bereaved Methodists on August 2, 1953. The news of the passing of Bishop Robert N. Brooks spread like wildfire. Death claimed him on that midafternoon Sunday at Gulfside.

For nine years, he served creditably the New Orleans Area as its episcopal leader. He had wrought well as an organizer,

builder, motivator and executive. He was truly a leader of men. His match was rare.

He possessed a genius for recruiting leaders for the jobs. He had an art for discovering hidden resources.

He was laid to rest August 6, 1953 at Gulfside within a stone throw of where he passed.

### **Interim Leadership**

For the second time in 15 years, the College of Bishops has been required to provide for interim leadership for the New Orleans Area. In 1940, it had to provide supervision for three years and eleven months. In 1953, it was for three years.

This time the Council of Bishops and the College of Bishops cooperated in providing the leadership. The Area had been a unit for 33 years; it is now divided. By vote of the Council of Bishops, Bishop A. P. Shaw was brought out of retirement and assigned to presidential supervision over the Texas and West Texas Conferences. The College of Bishops assigned Bishop W. J. King to presidential supervision of the Louisiana, Mississippi and Upper Mississippi Conferences. This assignment was in addition to Bishop King's responsibility for the Monrovia Area, Liberia.

### **The Leadership Role of the Veteran Edward Franklin Scarborough**

The Upper Mississippi Conference recognized with favor the leadership role of Edward Franklin Scarborough. He merited his place of honor among the Mississippi Circuit Riders. He was born on June 25, 1867.

He was the first born of Edmond and Julia Merchant Scarborough. He was born in a Methodist parsonage in Holmes County. Here he received his early training. He pursued his college training at Alcorn College, Lorman,

Mississippi. Later, he was awarded a diploma from Gammon Theological Seminary. Rust College conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

He began his ministerial career in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. On January 13, 1894, he was admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference on credentials. On January 16, 1897, he was admitted into full membership. He served fifty-two years in the ministry of the church. He and J. M. Walton tied for third place in rank order. Only Donaldson Green and W. H. Golden served longer in the history of the conference.

On January 15, 1894, he was assigned to Corinth Circuit. Here he served faithfully for two years. His next appointment was the Ripley Charge. Here he served also for two years. In 1898, he was left without an appointment to attend school.

In 1899, Edward Scarborough transferred to the Atlanta Conference. He served in this conference for five years. On January 9, 1904, he returned to the Upper Mississippi Conference. He was appointed to the St. Paul Church at Aberdeen, Mississippi. He served here for two years. In 1906, he was assigned to the Oxford Charge. One year later, he was appointed to Asbury Church, Holly Springs, Mississippi. On January 11, 1909, Edward Scarborough was appointed as the District Superintendent of the Tupelo District. He served this district for two years. This appointment was indeed an honor. He was the youngest man ever appointed to the district in the conference at that time. He had just passed his fortieth birthday.

This appointment was the beginning of a long career. He served for 26 years as District Superintendent. One half of his ministry was served in that manner. No man in the history of the conference matched that record. He is also the only man in the history of the conference who served as

the superintendent of every church in the conference. He served every district in the conference.

Edward Scarborough merited another distinction. He served the same charge four different times as pastor. He served the Asbury Church, Holly Springs, Mississippi, 1907-1909; 1915-1917; 1928-1930; 1940.

He was always a friend of the young preacher. When other superintendents would shun young, inexperienced preachers, he would seek them out. He trained them according to his fashion and sent them forth.

He was noted for his understanding of human nature. He possessed a keen insight into the leadership ability of men. His judgment of men was seldom wrong.

In appreciation for his leadership ability, the Upper Mississippi Conference honored him five times as its General Conference delegate. In 1928, he was sent to the General Conference at Kansas City, Missouri. He served also in the 1932, 1936, 1940 and 1944 General Conferences. He served also in the 1940 and 1944 Central Jurisdictional Conference.

He retired from the effective relationship on November 1, 1946. Since he was retiring from the district, the Cabinet elected him to read the composite report of the district superintendents. His closing words of the report were: "Finally, brethren, our past history has been glorious; the fathers have wrought well with their limited preparation for the work. But you are expected to do greater works than they; therefore, we are expecting you to give a good account of your ministry in the glorious work of helping Jesus Christ to serve this old sinful world." 7

At noon, January 25, 1955, this octogenarian closed his earthly ministry. He was laid to rest in Hill Crest Cemetery, Holly Springs, Mississippi.

**The 1956 Central Jurisdictional Conference  
Assigned Bishop W. J. King to The New Orleans Area**

In 1956, the Central Jurisdictional Conference convened on Dillard Campus, New Orleans, Louisiana. One of its tasks was the election of a successor to Bishop Robert N. Brooks. On June 16, 1956, the Conference elected Prince Albert Taylor, Jr. on the 9th ballot with 94 votes. He is a Mississippian by adoption. He was born in Oklahoma. After a few weeks, his parents returned to Mississippi. He was assigned presidential and residential supervision of the Monrovia Area.

The Conference assigned Bishop W. J. King to the presidential and residential supervision of the New Orleans Area. Happily, Bishop King closed his ministry in the effective relationship in his own home area.

Bishop King came to the area as no stranger. He was a product of the area. He was born in Rose Hill, Texas. For many years, he was a member of the Texas Conference. From this conference, he was elected to the episcopacy in 1944. He shared the honor with Bishop Robert E. Jones of being the only Negro elected to the episcopacy on the first ballot.

In addition to his acquaintanceship with the New Orleans Area, he brought qualifications to the Area unparalleled in its history. He is a Boston-trained doctorate in the field of the Old Testament. He had served as a college administrator. For twelve years, he served as President of Gammon Theological Seminary. Many of the leaders of the New Orleans Area had been his students in years past.

**A New Church Dedicated**

In 1958, Bishop King dedicated a church on the Union Grove Circuit. It was a new church. It was a gift of the Daripper family—a white family who lived in the com-

munity.<sup>8</sup> It was debt free and in fee simple title. The gift represented an act of reconciliation between the two races in Monroe County.

### **The Conference on the Ministry**

For many years, the Upper Mississippi Conference had experienced a ministerial shortage. The need was so imperative that the Conference could not dismiss it too cavalierly. Research indicated that there was a positive relationship between the intake of ministers and the growth of churches. In accord with the quadrennial program, a conference on the ministry was authorized on May 29, 1959. The conference was held in the spring of 1960.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Endorses Co-operative Ministries**

The ministerial shortage necessitated that the conference would take immediate action. In 1960, the conference authorized the Cabinet to rethink the appointments with the view of developing types of co-operative ministries. The objectives were to give each minister a full work load. In addition, it was a means of increasing the pastoral support of the ministers.

### **Good Example of Ministerial Recruitment**

In a study made by the writer entitled, "The Development of Negro Leadership for the Christian Ministry," 1965, he discovered that the minister was the most influential human agency in ministerial recruitment. The Negro theological graduates (1960-1964) indicated that the minister was the most influential in their vocational choice. Four out of every ten ranked the minister as the number one person. The father was the second in rank order.

A good example of ministerial recruitment as a father and a dedicated minister is found in John L. King, Sr. He

is the father of eight sons. Four sons have entered the Christian ministry.

The Reverend King was admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference on trial at Clarksdale, Mississippi on January 11, 1918. His first appointment was Water Valley on the Holly Springs District. He received \$200 for his first year. He served twelve other appointments in the conference. In addition, he served as the District Superintendent of the Aberdeen District from 1952-1958. His last appointment was Pickens Charge. On June 11, 1960, he retired from the effective relationship. He had spent 42 years in the effective relationship. He served one extra year after retirement.

When J. L. King retired, he was the richest man in the Upper Mississippi Conference. He was not rich in monetary terms. In fact, he received only \$43,321.00 for the 42 years. He reared a family of twelve on an average of \$1,000 per year. In addition, all of his children except two are college graduates. He is a rich man! He is rich in stocks and bonds. His ministerial recruits were his stocks and bonds. He has four sons dedicated to the Christian ministry. John Lucas, the eldest, was admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference in 1940. He is now serving in the Louisiana Conference. Ralph was admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference on November 13, 1942. Willard Maurice was admitted on trial in the Upper Mississippi Conference in 1959. He is now a member of the Tennessee-Kentucky Conference and a staff member of the Board of Evangelism. Marvin is the youngest of the committed sons. He is enrolling in theological seminary this September. The King family has given one hundred years to the ministry of The Methodist Church. This service record is unparalleled among the Mississippi Circuit Riders.

NOTE: John L. King, Sr. died on Wednesday, November 23, 1966 during the writing of this history.

### **The Upper Mississippi Conference is Placed in a New Area**

From 1912 to 1960, the Upper Mississippi Conference had been in the New Orleans Area. The 1960 Central Jurisdictional Conference placed it in the newly created area—The Nashville-Birmingham Area.

### **Another Mississippian Reaches the Top**

On July 14, 1960, Charles Franklin Golden, was elected as the ninth bishop of the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church. He was elected on the third ballot with 72 votes.<sup>9</sup> He was assigned to the Nashville-Birmingham Area—the third native son of Mississippi to be elevated among the men of color.

### **The Seventy-second Session of the Upper Mississippi Conference**

On May 17, 1961, the Upper Mississippi Conference convened in Haven Memorial Church, Clarksdale, Mississippi. It was the 72nd session of the conference. Its president was Bishop Charles F. Golden.<sup>10</sup>

It was a strange coincidence that Bishop Golden's first session would be at the Clarksdale Church. He began his ministry at this church in 1938. In this year, he was its pastor and twenty-three years later, he returns as its bishop. This was also the first Annual Conference to be presided over by the newly elected bishop.

### **The Interboard Council**

In 1947, the Upper Mississippi Conference created a coordinating Council. It was designed to answer the disciplinary question:

"What are the detailed objectives of the Conference?" When the Judicial Council ruled that a Commission or Council could be created for the purpose of correlating and pro-

moting the work of the various agencies, the council took on a new dimension.

At the conference of 1961, the Co-ordinating Council became the Interboard Council. It included all officers of all the conference boards, commissions and committees. In addition to the function designed for the Co-ordinating Council, it now established the Calendar of Events, not otherwise designated by the General Conference or general boards or agencies.

On May 17, 1961, the conference authorized the Interboard Council to become the conference agency to work toward an inclusive church. In adopting this recommendation, it became Rule 25 of the By-laws of the conference.

#### **Conference Votes on Resolution to Transfer Conferences**

On May 15, 1964, the conference voted unanimously to transfer the Delaware, Lexington and Washington Conferences to regional jurisdictions. The vote was 97 for the resolution and 0 against.<sup>11</sup> This was the first step in the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction.

#### **The Upper Mississippi Conference Votes in Favor of Transfer to the Southeastern Jurisdiction**

On May 15, 1964, the conference voted unanimously to transfer into the Southeastern Jurisdiction and to merge with the North Mississippi Conference.<sup>12</sup> The boundary of the Upper Mississippi Conference and the North Mississippi Conference are co-terminous. The resolution was not acted upon by other conferences to perfect the action.

#### **The Conference Makes a Pledge to Enlist Members of All Groups**

On May 14, 1964, the General Conference delegates—

J. H. Graham and I. P. Pressley presented the following resolution to the Upper Mississippi Conference:

Whereas, the General Conference of The Methodist Church meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania enacted into the law, the following:

- (1) On May 5, 1964, the General Conference overwhelmingly approved the amending of Paragraph 105 so that it now reads: 'The Methodist Church is a part of the Universal Church. Therefore, all persons without regard to race, color or national origin or economic condition shall be eligible to attend worship services, to participate in its program and to be admitted into its membership anywhere in the connection.'
- (2) On May 8, 1964, the General Conference amended Paragraph 322:6 so that when amended it would require every minister to answer the following question:

'Are you willing to relate yourself in the ministry to all persons, without regard to race, color or national origin, including receiving them into the membership and fellowship of the Church?'

Be it Resolved, That the Upper Mississippi Conference, meeting in Greenwood, Mississippi on this the fourteenth day of May in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred sixty-four, express its appreciation to the General Conference for this decision.

Secondly, That this conference would go on record as of this day of initiating plans of executing this mandate by actively seeking members for its local churches without regard to race, color, national origin or economic condition.<sup>18</sup>

By unanimous vote, the conference adopted the resolution. By its adoption, it pledged itself to a two-directional method of achieving an inclusive church. It urged all churches to serve all peoples in their Primary Service Area.

**Bishop M. L. Harris Becomes  
The Episcopal Leader for  
The Upper Mississippi Conference**

The seventh Central Jurisdictional Conference convened at Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach, Florida on

June 17, 1964. It re-assigned Bishop M. L. Harris to presidential and residential supervision of the Atlantic Coast Area. The College of Bishops placed the Central Alabama, Mississippi and Upper Mississippi Conferences in the Atlantic Coast Area.

### **The Diamond Anniversary of the Upper Mississippi Conference**

The Upper Mississippi Conference convened at the Griffin Methodist Church, Starkville, Mississippi on May 19, 1965 in the celebration of its 75 years as a distinct Annual Conference. It was an epoch-making occasion.

The singing of the hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive," was charged with great emotions but with the most ethical of all emotions—gratitude. The conference thanked God for its history. It was thankful for the past and hopeful for the future.

The Upper Mississippi Conference began in retrospect and ended in prospect. It began seventy-five years ago with 74 full members and seventeen probationers. It reported sixty-two members and two probationers in 1965. It began with 17,131 members and 88 pastoral charges. Seventy-five years later, it reported 68 pastoral charges and 14,161 members.

### **The Conference Votes to Transfer The Central West Conference**

On May 22, 1965, the conference voted to approve the transfer of the Central West Conference to the South Central Jurisdiction and to be merged immediately with the Missouri East and Missouri West Conferences. The resolution was approved by 96 for and none against.<sup>14</sup> This was the first action on the transfer and merger of a Negro Conference with regional conferences in the South Central Jurisdiction that was bi-laterally prepared and transmitted.

### **The Conference Votes Non-concurrence on the Resolution Regarding the Conferences of The Southwestern Area**

Within minutes after the Central West Conference resolution was unanimously adopted, the Upper Mississippi Conference voted non-concurrence upon the resolution to transfer the conferences of the Southwestern Area.<sup>15</sup>

The resolution was voted down because it had no specific terminal date for the merger of the conferences. It only expressed intent to merge by 1968. It did not represent a contractual agreement.

### **Crusade Scholars From Mississippi**

In 1944, the General Conference established a program of Crusade scholarships to give financial assistance in the training of the future leadership of the churches in the mission fields. At first, the scholarships were called the Crusade for Christ Scholarship program. It became operative in 1946. In the beginning, the program was confined to the mission fields. Later, the program was broadened to include minority groups within the United States.

The following Mississippians have been recipients of the Crusade scholarships :

Robert C. Stovall - 1957  
Willard M. King - 1959, 1960  
M. Dean Conoway - 1960, 1961  
Timothy B. Allen - 1961  
Elvernice Davis - 1963, 1964  
Willie B. Crump - 1961, 1962, 1963

All these recipients, except Timothy B. Allen, studied at Gammon Theological Seminary under this scholarship program. Timothy B. Allen enrolled in the area of Social Work at Scarritt College.

### **The Leflore County Extended Ministry**

In 1962, the Section of Home Fields of the Board of Missions introduced the Creative Experimental Program. This program was designed to assist new work or to strengthen on-going work where potentials for unusual or creative accomplishment in the mission of the church is indicated. This program is designed to:

- (1) Provide for experting service in more effective planning for long-range mission accomplishment,
- (2) Assist with more creative programming with new techniques and organizational forms,
- (3) Encourage leadership training for more creative ministries in today's changing communities. Short term use of incentive funds is stressed rather than sustaining Mission Aid.

Under the leadership of Israel L. Rucker, the Wesley Church, Greenwood, Mississippi, has assumed an extended ministry for the Delta Area. It aims to take the entire district in a creative experimental program. This district is composed of small struggling churches. Many churches are served by Approved Supply men. The Wesley Church is used to train the lay leaders for the district. Members of the church are pledged to give their time and services to assist these small churches in making an effective witness in their communities.

The Board of Missions through its department of Town and Country Work, co-operates with the Creative Experimental Program (CEP) through providing incentive grants and counselling.

### **The Methodist Mississippi Ministry**

The Board of Missions is at work in Mississippi in the area of reconciliation. One of the few projects in North

Mississippi which has been a co-operative venture in missions is the Methodist Mississippi Ministry. On February 1, 1965, Louise and Mathilda Killingsworth, the missionary sisters, began a special assignment in Clarksdale, Mississippi. They work under the supervision of the Department of Social Welfare of the National Division and Interracial Board of Managers. On the Board of Managers are the two bishops—Marquis L. Harris and Edward J. Pendergrass, district superintendents from the two jurisdictions, ministers and laymen of the two jurisdictions. Included are the Reverends George R. Williams and C. P. Payne, managers of the Board of Missions.

These missionaries are members of Haven Methodist Church (Central Jurisdiction). The church is located at Clarksdale, Mississippi. They are active in the local church and community. They are working in the area of leadership training and participate in programs of interracial nature.

One respondent described their work in these words—"They are at work to repair the broken lines of communication between the races of the state. They, by example preach the gospel of reconciliation."

### **The Conference Admits A Class in Full Membership in 1965**

On May 20, 1965, three young men were received in full connection of the Upper Mississippi Conference and ordained elders in The Methodist Church. This honor was bestowed upon the following:

Frederick R. Brown  
Elverneice Davis  
Sylvester Gillespie<sup>16</sup>

Unlike the eleven received on trial in the Mississippi Mission Conference in 1865, these men were college and semi-

nary graduates. It was unnecessary to suspend the rule to admit them, they were fully qualified under the Methodist law. They were welcomed into the fellowship by two retiring ministers, Webster B. Roger and Benjamin H. Ashford.

With the admission of the three young men on its Diamond Anniversary, the Upper Mississippi Conference had admitted 257 men in full membership in its seventy-five years as a distinct conference. This number does not include those admitted on credentials.

Mississippi Methodism has not been selfish in its leadership. In 1965, there were 55 native Mississippians serving in other conferences of The Methodist Church.

Upon motion of J. Q. C. James, the conference adjourned *sine die* on May 23, 1965—The Diamond Anniversary now enters the pages of history.

### **The Centennial Celebration of The Mississippi Mission Conference**

In preparation for the observance of the Centennial Celebration of missionary work among Negroes in the Southwest, the writer presented the following resolution to the Upper Mississippi Conference on May 11, 1962 for its consideration:

Whereas, the Mississippi Mission Conference was organized in Wesley Church, New Orleans, Louisiana on December 25, 1865;

Whereas, we will observe our one hundredth anniversary of the organization of an Annual Conference in Methodism in 1965, Therefore,

RESOLVED, That the Upper Mississippi Conference, the youngest of the conferences emerging out of the Mississippi Mission Conference, now in session at Starkville, Mississippi, invite the other conferences, namely, the Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and the West Texas Conferences to join with it in a co-operative celebration in 1965.

Be it RESOLVED, That a committee of five without regard to orders would be raised by each annual conference to work out details and promote the Centennial Celebration and when these persons are chosen, the episcopal leaders involved would issue a joint call for the organization of the Centennial Celebration.

RESOLVED further, That due emphasis shall be placed upon Church Extension, Recruiting, Stewardship, Reserve Pension Fund, etc. in the Centennial Celebration.

The resolution was adopted unanimously. The following persons were elected to constitute the committee: B. F. Harper, M. W. Lindsey, J. H. Graham, R. E. Hunt and Mrs. C. T. Griffin. These persons became the conference committee to prepare for the Centennial Celebration.

Similar resolutions were approved by the other conferences. Hence, an Area Centennial Committee was raised. The following persons were chosen to constitute this committee: Bishop M. L. Harris, Bishop N. W. Moore, Jr., Claude Williams (Mississippi Conference), Lee W. Lynn (Central Alabama Conference), M. J. Stallings (Upper Mississippi Conference), W. Talbot Handy, Sr. (Louisiana Conference), Robert E. Hayes (Texas Conference) and Ira B. Loud (West Texas Conference).

On January 7, 1966, the offsprings of the Mississippi Mission Conference convened at Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana, in celebration of its 100th anniversary. It was a day of great rejoicing. These sons of Wesley were happy over their achievements. The Mississippi Mission Conference began on December 25, 1865 with five white ministers as charter members. It admitted twelve men on trial. It reported 2,216 full church members. Five congregations had been organized.

A century later, the Mississippi Mission Conference had given birth to five annual conferences. These five conferences

could boast of 825 churches with an aggregate membership of 94,299. There were 521 ministers in full connection. Lustily these off-springs of the early Mississippi Circuit Riders could sing: “Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow.”

The last chapter will give biographical sketches of certain Circuit Riders who began their ministry in Mississippi and later became national figures.

## CHAPTER IX

### NATIONAL FIGURES IN METHODIST CIRCLES FROM MISSISSIPPI

IT IS NO SECRET that the Magnolia State has shared in the production of ministerial leadership for the Methodist Church. Only a few states, if any, have excelled in this respect. In the following pages are thumbnail sketches of a few Mississippi Circuit Riders who gained national recognition. These men have merited distinction in the parish ministry, college administration, executive positions of the Church and two have been elevated to the episcopacy.

#### **Matthew Winfred Dogan** (1863-1947)

The small hamlet, Pontotoc, Mississippi, is the birthplace of Matthew Winfred Dogan. He was born on December 21, 1863 of slave parents.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of six, his family moved to Holly Springs, Mississippi. Shaw University had just opened its doors for the training of culturally deprived boys and girls of the South. Matthew began his study at this university. He remained at Shaw until he received his baccalaureate degree in 1886.

On completion of his collegiate training, he served first as the principal of the training school located at the university for one year. The next year, he was elected as the professor of mathematics at his Alma Mater. He remained in this position for three (3) years. In 1891, Matthew Dogan went to Central Tennessee College, Nashville, Tennessee as the professor of ancient languages. He remained here for five years. In 1896, he was elected President of

Wiley College, Marshall, Texas. He remained in this position for 46 years. He retired from the presidency in 1942.

On December 18, 1896, Matthew Dogan was admitted on trial in the Texas Conference.<sup>2</sup> On December 15, 1898, he was admitted into full connection. Two years later, he was ordained elder in the Methodist Church.

His entire ministry was spent in college administration. He made an enviable record at Wiley College. Upon his retirement, these words were expressed: "Wiley College is the lengthened shadow of Matthew Winfred Dogan."<sup>3</sup>

Two marked distinctions have been earned by this educator. He served the same institution as its president longer than any other college administrator among men of color. He still holds the longest service record in the General Conference of any man of color. In 1904, he was elected to the General Conference for the first time. He served in every successive General Conference until 1940. In addition, he served in the 1939 Uniting Conference. In fact, he was a delegate to ten General Conferences of The Methodist Church. Strangely enough, he was elected each time on the first ballot. Few, if any delegates, can claim such distinction.

On October 17, 1942, he retired from the Texas Annual Conference. On June 17, 1947, Matthew Dogan closed his ministry on earth.<sup>4</sup>

### **Pezavia O'Connell** (1861-1930)

Another educator discovered daylight in Mississippi. The Reverend Pezavia O'Connell was born in Natchez, Mississippi, on March 2, 1861.<sup>5</sup> He was the son of Richard and Angeline O'Connell. At Natchez, he received his early training. His collegiate training was secured at Jackson Baptist College and Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio. From the

latter, he was awarded the baccalaureate degree. He pursued his theological training at Gammon Theological Seminary. He received his Bachelor of Divinity degree from this institution in 1888.

On October 24, 1888, Pezavia was married to Maria June Johnson. The next year, he entered the North Carolina Conference. He was admitted on credentials from the African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>6</sup> His first appointment was Raleigh, North Carolina. Here he served for only ten months. His next appointment was the St. Matthews Church at Greensboro, North Carolina. For three years, he labored in this college community.

In 1893, he transferred to the Delaware Conference. He served the following pastoral charges: Newark and Bainbridge Street in Philadelphia. He served also as the Presiding Elder of the Salisbury District. In the field of education, he served as the Principal of Princess Anne Academy.

He took advantage of the proximity of Philadelphia for the continuation of his training. He enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania for advanced training. He was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree from this institution in 1898. He furthered his academic training by taking post graduate courses at Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

In 1911, he entered the educational field. He served as professor at Howard University for two years. In 1913, he returned to Gammon Theological Seminary as professor of Old Testament and Christian Sociology. He taught here for three years. In 1916, he transferred to the Lexington Conference. He was appointed to the Cory Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He served this metropolitan church for four years. In 1920, he returned to the Delaware Conference. He was appointed as professor of history at Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland. He remained in this position until death.

On November 26, 1930, he was stricken with an acute heart attack. He died a few minutes later.<sup>7</sup>

**John Nelson Clark Coggins**  
(1870-1927)

Lafayette County has been a seed bed for Methodist leaders. On May 8, 1870, John Nelson Clark Coggins was born to the union of Daniel and Martha Blakley Coggins.<sup>8</sup> He was reared in a very religious atmosphere.

At ten, he professed faith in Christ. At sixteen, he was licensed to preach. He became known as the "boy preacher" from Oxford, Mississippi.

On February 7, 1891, he was admitted on trial in the first session of the Upper Mississippi Conference.<sup>9</sup> He was appointed to Holly Springs Circuit. This appointment afforded him an opportunity to continue his education at Rust College. He studied at Rust for four years while he served the Holly Springs Circuit.

On January 30, 1893, John Nelson entered holy wedlock with Jesse Grey Hill of Holly Springs, Mississippi. She graced the parsonage on the Holly Springs circuit for two years.

In 1895, he transferred to the Savannah Conference as a probationer. He was ordained an elder at Waynesboro, Georgia by Bishop Walden. The next year, he transferred to the Atlanta Conference. He continued his training at Clark University. From this institution, he received his bachelor's degree. Later, he enrolled at Gammon Theological Seminary and completed his theological training here.

He served the following pastoral appointments in Georgia :

Bellwood Avenue  
Fort Street  
Grantville, and  
Covington, Georgia

He was elected as field secretary of the Young People's Christian and Educational Conference in Atlanta.

In 1914, he was elected and appointed as the Secretary of the Colored Work of the Board of Temperance and Public Morals, with headquarters in Washington, D. C. He became a strong voice against the growing liquor menace among the colored people. He served in this capacity for ten years. In 1924, he was granted a leave of absence by the Atlanta Conference. The next year he served as the conference evangelist.

On December 3, 1926, he transferred to the New York Conference. He was assigned to the Mt. Calvary Church.<sup>10</sup> His ministry was very short in this new pastorate.

On November 11, 1927, he ended a brilliant career through death. These words were a tribute to him:

As a preacher, he was thoroughly orthodox and evangelistic; as a pastor, he was sympathetic, faithful and progressive; as a reformer, he was courageous, defiant and determined; as a friend, he was true, thoughtful and self-forgetful. As a Christian, he was humble, yet loyal and optimistic.

" . . . In the loss of Dr. Coggins, the ministry is shorn of a brilliant scholarly mind." <sup>11</sup>

### **Griffin Goswald Logan (1871-1931)**

Lafayette County makes Methodist news again. On March 4, 1871, Griffin Goswald Logan was born. He grew up in this county.

He received his collegiate training at Rust College. In 1893, he earned the Bachelor of Arts degree from this institution. Later, he received his Master of Arts degree from Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Illinois.

Griffin Logan was admitted in the Upper Mississippi Conference on trial on February 4, 1893. He was admitted into

full connection on Saturday, January 12, 1895. On January 17, 1897, he was ordained elder.<sup>12</sup> For three years, he served as a professor at Rust College. In 1900, he was assigned to Elliott Charge. The next year, he was assigned to Corinth Charge. He served this charge for one year. In 1902, he was appointed as presiding elder of the Tupelo District. From the district, he was elected as field agent of the Missionary Society. He served in this position from 1903 until 1910. He took supernumerary relation for one year. In 1911, he was appointed to the Duncan Charge. The next year, he was assigned to Tunica. Again, he was placed on supernumerary relations. In 1913, he was transferred from the Upper Mississippi Conference to Lincoln Conference. In April, 1915, he was assigned to Omaha, Nebraska. Here he served for four years. In 1919, he was appointed as District Superintendent of the Topeka District. After completion of his tenure on the district, he was appointed to Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1925. He served this charge for two years. In 1927, he was appointed to Ardmore, Oklahoma. His last appointment was the Whites Chapel Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. Griffin Goswald Logan died on October 4, 1931. He died at Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>13</sup>

He was a delegate to four General Conferences. The Upper Mississippi Conference sent him to the 1900, 1904 and 1908 General Conferences. In 1920, the Lincoln Conference sent Griffin Logan to the General Conference. He was a Reserve to the 1924 General Conference.

He was very active in the deliberations of the General Conference. On May 12, 1908, Logan presented the following resolution to the General Conference:

Therefore, be it resolved, That a commission of seven consisting of one bishop, three ministers and three laymen be appointed by this General Conference to be sent during the

ensuing quadrennium to confer with similar representatives of three churches,

A. M. E.

A. M. E. Z.

C. M. E.

upon such question as may lead to more harmonious co-operation among them and the solution of difficult problems.<sup>14</sup>

The resolution was referred to the Committee on Federation. On May 20, 1908, the Committee on Federation recommended its adoption to the General Conference. It was approved.

**William W. Lucas**  
(1872-

Can any good come out of Macon, Mississippi? In 1870, Macon had a population of 488. Although it was indeed a small village, it was a veritable hell in the early seventies. A reign of terror existed in Noxubee County. There was a growing reaction to the emancipation of the Negroes. The white citizens on a whole refused to accept the Negroes as free. They still looked upon them as property and refused to grant them opportunity to become property owners.

Any person who worked to upgrade the former slaves was persecuted. Hatred was rife throughout Noxubee County. One person wrote to Governor Ames:

We are anxious for you to know the condition of our country. Here is about 25,000 raticals [*sic*] of we colored population never got to cast a vote . . . (The Democrats) have been shooting and raring around this two months . . . Although we colored people wish to have peace; but I do say we cannot live at this rate.<sup>15</sup>

It was during this reign of terror that W. W. Lucas was born in Noxubee County. He was born on August 2, 1872—during the period when all Negro schools were closed. Every effort was made to keep the Negroes poor and illiter-

ate. His parents were determined to give him an opportunity of which they had been deprived. In spite of handicaps, he received his baccalaureate degree from Central Tennessee College at Nashville, Tennessee. In 1893, he was awarded the Bachelor of Divinity degree from Gammon Theological Seminary.

On January 12, 1894, William Lucas was admitted on trial in the Savannah Conference.<sup>16</sup> Two years later, he was admitted into full membership.

In 1901, he was appointed as secretary of the Stewart Missionary Foundation. In January, 1904, he transferred to the Mississippi Conference. His first appointment in this conference was principal of Meridian Academy. He served as principal of the Meridian Academy for four years. In 1908, he was appointed as Conference Evangelist. In this capacity, he served for one year. In 1909, Bishop Robert McIntyre appointed him as the District Superintendent of the Vicksburg District. Again he served for one year. In 1910, William Lucas was elected as Field Agent of the Board of Missions. Three years later, he was elected as Assistant General Secretary of the Epworth League. The members of the Mississippi Conference held him in high esteem. This conference honored him by electing him as a delegate to the 1908, 1912, 1916 and 1920 General Conferences.

William Lucas played a significant role in the election of a Negro as a General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He presented the resolution to the 1920 General Conference that paved the way for the election of a Negro to the Episcopacy. It precipitated the action. He may be described as the "sacrificial hit." When the door was opened, he only received five votes for the episcopacy.

In 1921, he was granted a year's leave of absence. In 1922, he withdrew from the church.<sup>17</sup>

**Lorenzo Houston King**  
(1878-1946)

Macon, Mississippi produced another Methodist leader. Perhaps no one dreamed that when Lorenzo Houston was born in Noxubee County, a potential Methodist bishop was born. On January 2, 1878, he was born to the union of Houston Carlton and Leah King.<sup>18</sup>

Early in his life, his family moved to Atlanta, Georgia. Here he received his collegiate and theological training at Clark University and Gammon Theological Seminary respectively.

On December 17, 1901, Lorenzo Houston King was admitted into the Atlanta Conference by Bishop John M. Walden.<sup>19</sup> His first appointment was Elberton Charge. He remained here one year only.

On December 13, 1903, he entered holy matrimony with Louise Marie Watts. One week later, he was assigned to Covington, Georgia. Here his young bride entered the ministry with him. His third appointment was South Atlanta Church. Here he remained for three years. He served the Newnan Charge 1910-1912. In 1912, he was elected professor of English at Clark University. Unaccustomed to the life of a teacher, he remained for only one year. He returned to the parish ministry. He was appointed to the Central Church, Atlanta, Georgia. He remained in this parish for seven years.

In 1920, Dr. Lorenzo H. King was elected as editor of the Southwestern Christian Advocate.<sup>20</sup> He remained in this editorial position for eleven years. He spared no pains with the printer's ink. His pen won for him many friends among his readers. In 1931, he returned again to the parish ministry.

He transferred to the New York Conference. He was ap-

pointed to the St. Mark Church. It was from this church that he was elevated to the episcopacy.

On June 21, 1940, Dr. L. H. King was elected bishop in the Methodist Church. He was elected on the fifth ballot with 81 votes. He was the second bishop elected by the Central Jurisdiction. He had the distinction of being the first bishop elected by a Jurisdiction of which he was not a member. He was assigned by the Central Jurisdictional Conference to the Atlantic Coast Area. With the exception of the brief span of Bishop Matthew Clair, Sr. in this area, he was the first Negro bishop to have presidential and residential supervision of this area. He died on December 17, 1946 in New York City. He died on his 45th anniversary of his admission to the Atlanta Conference on trial.

**John Beverly Ford Shaw**  
(1876-1961)

Abbeville, Mississippi comes into Methodist news again. It produced two outstanding Methodist brothers—John Beverly Ford and Alexander Preston. These boys were born in a Methodist parsonage. Beverly, the older of the two, was born April 15, 1876.

Beverly received his early training under the tutelage of the widow of James Lynch. At 14, he earned a certificate to teach in the public schools of Mississippi. By teaching during the summer months, he earned sufficient funds to defray his expenses for high school and college. In 1899, Rust College conferred the Bachelor of Arts degree upon him. He pursued further training at the University of Chicago. He was reputed to be proficient in six languages.

In 1909, he was admitted on trial in the Upper Mississippi Conference. In 1911, he was ordained an elder.<sup>21</sup>

Most of his ministry was in the field of education. From 1916 to 1920, he served as president of the Central Alabama

College, Birmingham, Alabama. In 1921, he returned to Haven for his second time. He had served this school previously from 1905 to 1916. He remained president of Haven's Academy this time until it closed. The Board of Education closed the college in 1929. Beverly entered the parish ministry in 1930. He served as pastor of the Scott Church, Pasadena, California for six years. In 1936, he transferred to the Mississippi Conference. He was appointed as District Superintendent of the Jackson District. Four years later, he transferred to the Tennessee Conference and was assigned to the Centenary Church, Memphis, Tennessee. In 1946, Beverly transferred to the Washington Conference and became the Baltimore Area Secretary. Here he remained until his retirement. He retired in 1948. On March 21, 1961, the octogenarian died in Los Angeles, California.

**Alexander Preston Shaw**  
(1879-1966)

April is an historic birth month for the Shaw family. On April 18, 1879, another Shaw brother was born. In a log cabin, the Methodist parsonage, was born Alexander Preston Shaw to the union of Duncan Preston and Maria (Petty) Shaw.

He received his early training in Lafayette County. He enrolled at Rust College for his preparatory and college training. In 1902, Alexander Preston graduated from Rust College. In 1906, he received his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Gammon Theological Seminary. He did further study at Boston University under the famous Borden P. Bowne, the father of Personalism.

While he studied in Atlanta, he began a courtship with Miss Lettye Blanche Simon. This courtship led to marriage on March 29, 1911.

Alexander Preston began his ministry in the Washington

Conference. On March 27, 1908, he was admitted on trial in the Conference. He was ordained elder in 1910.<sup>22</sup>

Most of his ministry was in the parish. In the Washington Conference, he served the following charges:

Winchester, Virginia  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
Westminster, Maryland

In 1915, he transferred to the Wesley Church, Little Rock, Arkansas. Here he served for only two years. In 1917, he transferred to the Southern California Conference. He was appointed to the Wesley Church at Los Angeles. He served in this parish for 14 years.

In appreciation for his ministry in the Southern California Conference, it honored him by electing him as a delegate to the 1928 General Conference. This esteem was evidenced in electing Alexander Preston as the fourth delegate of a ministerial delegation of nine. This was a distinct honor indeed. Only W. H. Brooks had been elected by a predominantly white conference previously. He was elected in 1920 by the New York Conference.

Upon the resignation of L. H. King, as editor of the Southwestern Christian Advocate, A. P. Shaw was elected his successor in 1931. With his pen, he continued to evangelize the world. His editorials soon became the first thing read in the Southwestern. He remained in this position until he was elevated to the episcopacy.

On May 14, 1936, Alexander Preston Shaw was elected General Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was the first Mississippi Circuit Rider to be so honored. He was elected on the fifth ballot with 462 votes.<sup>23</sup>

The General Conference assigned Bishop A. P. Shaw to the residential and presidential supervision of the New Orleans Area. He served this area for one quadrennium. In

1940, the Baltimore Area was created by the Central Jurisdiction. He was assigned to this Area. Here he remained until retirement.

Bishop Shaw was truly evangelistic. He was be remembered for the great sermons he delivered. Most of all, he will long be remembered for his presentation of the Episcopal Address at the Central Jurisdictional Conference in 1944. These words brought the conference to its feet:

The Central Jurisdiction was an administrative arrangement against which a majority of us had voted. Having been loyal Methodists, we accepted the mandate of the majority in the church and set about our work determined to succeed and make the quality of the service rendered by our Jurisdiction second to none among the Jurisdictions of American Methodism. . . .

We accept the setting apart of a Central Jurisdiction only as an administrative arrangement for the Negro membership in the Methodist Church. We are not at all in harmony with any Methodists or others who think such a plan is necessary in a truly Christian brotherhood. We consider it expedient only on account of the Christian childhood of some American Methodists who need a little coddling until they can grow into full grown manhood and womanhood in Christ Jesus.

We are hopeful that in the near future our Methodism may become sufficiently Christian in character and maturity to find a more excellent way.<sup>24</sup>

In 1952, Bishop Shaw retired from the effective relationship. On March 7, 1966, he closed his biography on this earth. Like his father, D. P. Shaw, a veteran minister of Upper Mississippi Conference and his brother, John Beverly Ford, all fell victims of death in the month of March.

His funeral was held at the Holman Church, Los Angeles, California on March 12, 1966. The eulogy was delivered by Bishop W. J. King. Another octogenarian closed his ministerial career in this world. He had spent 58 years of his life in the Methodist ministry.

**Lee Marcus McCoy**  
(1882-1960)

On Memorial Day, 1882, a son was born to the union of Abraham and Louise McCoy.<sup>25</sup> He was baptized in the Methodist Episcopal Church as Lee Marcus, whose birthplace was Tippah County near Ripley, Mississippi.

Very early in his life, his family moved to Little Rock, Arkansas. Here he received his early training. He continued his training at Rust College. In 1905, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from this institution.

The next year, he was elected Vice Principal of the Meridian Academy. He served in this administrative position for three years. In 1909, he returned to his Alma Mater as professor of Mathematics. Two years later, he assumed the principalship of the Lincoln High School, Fort Smith, Arkansas. He served here for three years. In 1914, he accepted the position of the Professor of Mathematics at Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Arkansas.

During his stay at Philander Smith, he entered the Christian ministry. He was admitted into the Little Rock Conference in 1915. In 1920, he was admitted into full membership. Two years later, he was ordained elder.

With the exception of serving the Morrillton Charge for a brief period, his entire ministry was in the field of education. For two years, he served as principal of Lynchburg Collegiate Institute, Lynchburg, Virginia. In 1918, he assumed the deanship of Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland. He served as the academic dean of this institution for six years.

In 1924, Dr. McCoy was called back to Rust College, his Alma Mater, in the capacity of president. To chronicle his work at Rust College would require a separate volume.

By some contemporaries, L. M. McCoy was dubbed as a monomaniac. "He had one magnificent obsession—to

make Rust College a first class collegiate institution." Others referred to him as a social pioneer in Marshall County. He took the students of the college and employed modern methods of agriculture. Many red hills of Marshall County were converted into a modern farm. From this farm, he kept the school alive during the depression days.

The genius of his leadership was evidenced on January 8, 1939. On that day, Rust College burned into ashes. At least the main building, Rust Hall, burned. Rust did not burn down according to its leader—only the building. Rust did not exist in mortar and bricks but in people.

Lee Marcus McCoy was an optimist. He assured his hearers that a new Rust building would be erected upon the ruins of the old ones. His optimism flowered into a reality in 1947. A new administration building was dedicated and named in honor of its president.

In 1955, Dr. McCoy retired as president of Rust College and as a member of the Upper Mississippi Conference. He gave thirty-five years of his very life blood to this institution. With the exception of Matthew Dogan, a Rust alumnus, L. M. McCoy, had the longest tenure as president of the same institution of any of the Mississippi Circuit Riders. After retirement, Dr. McCoy lived in Chicago. On April 17, 1960, he died. He must be included always among the illustrious alumni of Rust College.

**James Walter Golden**  
(1883-1961)

Columbus, Mississippi has also contributed to the production of ministerial leadership for the Methodist Church. On September 6, 1883, James Walter was born to the union of William and Lucinda (Ball) Golden.<sup>28</sup> James Walter was always high in praise of this town. Frequently he said: "I was born twice in Columbus."

Soon after birth, the young James Walter was bereft of parents. Though he was denied the blessings of a father's companionship and a mother's love, his sensitive spirit found joy in the devotion of an aunt. She became a worthy substitute for his parents. She was in truth, a Godsend to young J. W. She spent hours, even days in winning his affection and moulding his character.

On February 12, 1900, James Walter entered holy wedlock with Miss Mary P. Tyson. To this union were born nine children. On January 13, 1930, Mrs. Golden completed her earthly career.

In 1908, J. W. Golden was admitted into the Upper Mississippi Conference as an itinerant minister. For two years, he was left without an appointment to continue his academic preparation. In 1910, Bishop W. F. Anderson assigned him to Byhalia. While serving this charge, he continued his studies at Rust College. Two years later, he was appointed to Verona. His next appointment was Shuqualak. In 1914, he was appointed to Winona, Mississippi. His success was so amazing here that he was appointed as a District Superintendent. He served the Tupelo District for two years. After then, he was transferred to the Greenwood District. He served the district for five years. During this period, the Wesley Church at Greenwood, Mississippi was erected.

In 1923, he began his work in the field of evangelism full time. Bishop Jones appointed him the Area Evangelist of the New Orleans Area. With the exception of two years as District Superintendent of the Greenwood District (1932-1934) for the second time and the Memphis District of the Tennessee Conference in 1938-1941, he remained full time in the field of evangelism. He served the church in this field for 33 years.

In 1937, Dr. Golden transferred to the Tennessee Con-

ference.<sup>27</sup> He served faithfully in this conference until his retirement.

Dr. Golden served in several General Conferences. The Upper Mississippi Conference elected him to serve in the 1924, 1928 and 1932 General Conferences. The Tennessee Conference honored him by electing him to serve in the 1939 Uniting Conference and the 1940 General Conference.

It is an accepted fact that J. W. Golden was one of the great evangelists of the modern day. Hundreds of souls were added to the Christian fellowship through his preaching. Among his converts was Dr. Earnest Andrew Smith, the President of Rust College. He was converted in a revival conducted at St. Paul's Church, Birmingham, Alabama. In honor of his work in the field of Evangelism, Golden Church, Memphis, Tennessee was dedicated.

On June 30, 1956, he retired from the effective relationship in the Tennessee Conference. He continued to be a flaming evangel in Memphis. On January 23, 1961, he died.

### **John Beverly Redmond (1872-1937)**

Holmes County, Mississippi made a distinct contribution to Methodist leadership in providing a birthplace for the erstwhile pastor, John Beverly Redmond. He was born at Lexington, Mississippi on February 25, 1872. He received his early academic training in Holmes County. He completed his collegiate training at Rust College in 1900. Six years later, he was awarded the Bachelor of Divinity degree at Gammon Theological Seminary. He was a classmate of Bishop A. P. Shaw.

In 1902, he was admitted on trial in the Upper Mississippi Conference. On January 12, 1907, he was transferred as a probationer to the Lexington Conference. He received his elder's orders in this conference in 1907, at Paris, Kentucky.

Unlike the other Mississippi Circuit Riders enumerated in this chapter, all his ministry was in the pastorate and as a district superintendent. In 1908, he was appointed to the Scott Church in Chicago. Two years later, he was assigned to the Mt. Zion Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. From 1911 to 1914, he served in Paris, Kentucky. In 1914, he was appointed district superintendent of the Lexington (Kentucky) District. When he had completed his tenure as District Superintendent, he was appointed to the Cory Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He remained here for three years. In 1923, he was assigned to the St. Mark's Church, Chicago, Illinois. Here he remained until death claimed him.

In this parish, he made a remarkable record. In 1923, the church reported 2200 members. By 1937, the membership had increased to 3949.

During the early thirties, Dr. Redmond developed a program to minister to the needs of the senior citizens. A young woman's club was organized for this purpose. It ministered to the needs of 150 senior citizens in the community of St. Mark's Church. These young adults helped these aged and infirm women to adjust to retirement in a remarkable way. Frequent visits were made to their homes. These young adults worshipped with them in their homes. Quarterly, they escorted these senior citizens to the church for worship.

The Lexington Conference honored Dr. Redmond thrice by electing him as a delegate to the General Conference. He served in the following General Conferences: 1920, 1924 and 1936. He served on the general Boards of the Church. At the time of his death, he was an influential member of the Book Committee.

On Friday night, June 25, 1937, John Beverly Redmond died at 11: p.m.<sup>28</sup> The service record of one of the most outstanding pastors of the Mississippi Circuit Riders ended.

These all died in faith not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a home land (Hebrew 11:13-14).

These men have carved indelibly their initials on the future of Mississippi Methodism.

The ministry of reconciliation so nobly begun by these outstanding Mississippi Circuit Riders is now continued in the living Circuit Riders dispersed. There are still native Mississippians serving in responsible positions of the Church. In the editorial field, L. Scott Allen is proclaiming the Gospel through the pages of the Central Christian Advocate. Woodie D. Lester is continuing the evangelistic fires begun by the late J. W. Golden. In the Board of Evangelism is the youthful Maurice King. He is making his Witness through the work of the Upper Room.

“And what more can I say”? “For time would fail me” to speak of Robert Corbitt Stovall, District Superintendent of the Savannah District. Frank Montgomery, District Superintendent of the La Grange District, Henry Hardy Backstrum, the District Superintendent of the Atlanta North District, and Hooker Davis, City executive of the New Jersey area. These along with the men in the parish ministry in the several annual conferences are giving good accounts of the missionary dollar expended in the Church. They are meriting their laurels daily. They are history makers today.

## CONFERENCE OFFICERS 1891 - 1965

### 1. President

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Bishop Edward G. Andrews     | 1891 |
| Bishop Stephen M. Merrill    | 1892 |
| Bishop Thomas Bowman         | 1893 |
| Bishop John M. Walden        | 1894 |
| Bishop John H. Vincent       | 1895 |
| Bishop John F. Hurst         | 1896 |
| Bishop Edward G. Andrews     | 1897 |
| Bishop William X. Ninde      | 1898 |
| Bishop Stephen M. Merrill    | 1899 |
| Bishop William F. Mallalieu  | 1900 |
| Bishop John F. Hurst         | 1901 |
| Bishop Charles H. Fowler     | 1902 |
| Bishop William F. Mallalieu  | 1903 |
| Bishop William F. Mallalieu  | 1904 |
| Bishop Henry Spellmeyer      | 1905 |
| Bishop William F. McDowell   | 1906 |
| Bishop John F. Berry         | 1907 |
| Bishop Luther B. Wilson      | 1908 |
| Bishop Thomas B. Neely       | 1909 |
| Bishop William F. Anderson   | 1910 |
| Bishop William A. Quayle     | 1911 |
| Bishop John L. Nuelson       | 1912 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1913 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1914 |
| Bishop Naphati Luccock       | 1915 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1916 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1917 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1918 |
| Bishop Francis J. McConnell  | 1919 |
| Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield   | 1920 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1921 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1922 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1923 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1924 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1925 |
| Bishop Frederick T. Keeney   | 1926 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1927 |
| Bishop Charles L. Mead       | 1928 |
| Bishop Wallace E. Brown      | 1928 |
| Bishop Titus Lowe            | 1929 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1930 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones       | 1931 |
| Bishop Matthew W. Clair, Sr. | 1932 |

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1933 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1934 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1935 |
| Bishop Alexander P. Shaw   | 1936 |
| Bishop Ralph Magee         | 1937 |
| Bishop Alexander P. Shaw   | 1938 |
| Bishop Alexander P. Shaw   | 1939 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1940 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1941 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1942 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1943 |
| Bishop Robert N. Brooks    | 1944 |
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| Bishop Robert N. Brooks    | 1948 |
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| Bishop Robert N. Brooks    | 1951 |
| Bishop Robert N. Brooks    | 1952 |
| Bishop Robert E. Jones     | 1953 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1954 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1955 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1956 |
| Bishop J. W. E. Bowen, Jr. | 1957 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1958 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1959 |
| Bishop Willis J. King      | 1960 |
| Bishop Charles F. Golden   | 1961 |
| Bishop Charles F. Golden   | 1962 |
| Bishop Charles F. Golden   | 1963 |
| Bishop Charles F. Golden   | 1964 |
| Bishop Marquis L. Harris   | 1965 |

## 2. Conference Secretary

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| John L. Wilson    | 1891 - 1894 |
| B. F. S. Ferguson | 1895 - 1896 |
| F. H. Bunton      | 1897 - 1899 |
| N. R. Clay        | 1900 - 1907 |
| C. E. Moody       | 1908 - 1911 |
| F. H. Bunton      | 1912        |
| B. F. Woolfolk    | 1913 - 1928 |
| P. A. Lemon       | 1928 - 1929 |
| W. N. Redmond     | 1930 - 1939 |
| C. A. Tolbert     | 1940 - 1947 |
| R. L. Sweeney     | 1948 - 1951 |
| A. O. Holmes      | 1952 - 1953 |
| W. C. Norwood     | 1954 - 1955 |

## CONFERENCE OFFICERS

|                                     |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| J. C. Peters                        | 1956 - 1959              |
| R. L. Sweeney                       | 1960 - 1963              |
| Ralph P. King                       | 1964 - 1965              |
| <br>3. Conference Treasurer         |                          |
| Richard Sewall                      | 1891                     |
| T. L. Ingram                        | 1892                     |
| S. R. Gibson                        | 1893 - 1895              |
| M. C. Ewen                          | 1896 - 1900              |
| T. W. Davis                         | 1901 - 1902              |
| D. Green                            | 1903 - 1916              |
| H. B. Hart                          | 1917 - 1923              |
| C. W. Evans                         | 1924                     |
| J. W. Golden                        | 1925 - 1932              |
| L. M. McCoy                         | 1933 - 1955              |
| M. W. Lindsey                       | 1956 - 1961              |
| R. E. Hunt                          | 1962 - 1965              |
| <br>4. Statistician                 |                          |
| F. H. Bunton                        | 1891 - 1892              |
| N. H. Williams                      | 1893 - 1901              |
| G. J. Dodson                        | 1902 - 1923              |
| J. H. Wesley                        | 1924 - 1928              |
| B. G. Pegues                        | 1928 - 1945              |
| W. G. Preuitt                       | 1946 - 1952              |
| A. B. Littles                       | 1953 - 1957              |
| Q. C. Hilliard                      | 1958 - 1965              |
| <br>5. Presiding Elders (1891-1908) |                          |
| N. R. Clay                          | 1907 - 1908              |
| W. C. Clay                          | 1903 - 1909              |
| J. W. Davis                         | 1891 - 1896              |
| Q. W. Davis                         | 1902 - 1908              |
| J. H. Everett                       | 1908                     |
| B. H. S. Ferguson                   | 1896 - 1902              |
| F. H. Henry                         | 1905 - 1909              |
| P. O. Jamison                       | 1893 - 1902              |
| G. G. Logan                         | 1902                     |
| W. E. Mask                          | 1895 - 1900              |
| Warren McDonald                     | 1891 - 1899              |
| S. H. Nevils                        | 1893 - 1896; 1904 - 1907 |
| H. R. Revils                        | 1891 - 1902              |
| Richard Sewall                      | 1891 - 1893              |
| C. W. Walton                        | 1899 - 1905              |
| N. H. Williams                      | 1901 - 1907              |
| L. F. White                         | 1897 - 1903              |
| J. W. Winbush                       | 1903 - 1907              |
| B. F. Woolfolk                      | 1900 - 1907              |

## 6. District Superintendents (1908-1965)

|                    |                                                       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| C. T. Allen        | 1946 - 1952                                           |
| B. H. Ashford      | 1958 - 1962                                           |
| C. W. Butler       | 1910 - 1916; 1924 - 1928                              |
| G. M. Chisholm     | 1917 - 1921; 1935 - 1940                              |
| N. R. Clay         | 1909 - 1912; 1916 - 1921                              |
| A. G. Cole         | 1926 - 1930                                           |
| A. W. Crump        | 1938 - 1940                                           |
| J. H. Everett      | 1908 - 1911                                           |
| W. H. Gilliam      | 1909 - 1915                                           |
| J. L. Glenn        | 1938 - 1944                                           |
| J. W. Golden       | 1915 - 1922; 1932 - 1934                              |
| W. H. Golden       | 1916 - 1923                                           |
| J. H. Graham       | 1944 - 1950                                           |
| D. Green           | 1926 - 1932                                           |
| B. F. Harper       | 1938 - 1944; 1950 - 1956                              |
| H. B. Hart         | 1908 - 1914; 1923                                     |
| C. V. Heffner      | 1926 - 1932; 1944 - 1946                              |
| F. H. Henry        | 1908 - 1910; 1914 - 1921                              |
| W. F. Isaiah       | 1911 - 1922                                           |
| D. T. Jackson      | 1958 - 1964                                           |
| J. L. King, Sr.    | 1952 - 1958                                           |
| F. P. Leonard      | 1929 - 1932                                           |
| M. W. Lindsey      | 1962 -                                                |
| J. M. Marsh        | 1910 - 1916; 1921 - 1924;<br>1932 - 1938              |
| C. H. Maxwell      | 1929 - 1932                                           |
| E. R. Miller       | 1924                                                  |
| H. G. Montgomery   | 1946 - 1952                                           |
| D. L. Morgan       | 1938 - 1944                                           |
| S. H. Nevils       | 1908 - 1909                                           |
| M. C. Pulliam      | 1923                                                  |
| W. G. Preuitt      | 1952 - 1958; 1960 -                                   |
| W. N. Redmond, Jr. | 1964 -                                                |
| W. N. Redmond, Sr. | 1921 - 1926                                           |
| O. L. Rencher      | 1958 - 1964                                           |
| E. F. Scarborough  | 1908 - 1914; 1917 - 1923;<br>1931 - 1938; 1942 - 1946 |
| F. S. Smith        | 1924 - 1926                                           |
| M. J. Stallings    | 1946 - 1952; 1956 - 1962                              |
| R. L. Sweeney      | 1952 - 1958; 1964 -                                   |
| F. J. Tolbert      | 1932 - 1938; 1944 - 1946                              |
| J. H. Tolbert      | 1921 - 1927                                           |
| M. L. Tolbert      | 1953                                                  |
| E. C. F. Troupe    | 1914 - 1916                                           |
| J. M. Walton       | 1923 - 1926                                           |
| J. H. Wesley       | 1927 - 1932; 1940 - 1946                              |
| H. H. Williams     | 1946 - 1952                                           |
| J. W. Winbush      | 1908 - 1909                                           |
| B. F. Woolfolk     | 1908 - 1909                                           |
| B. W. Wynn         | 1924 - 1929                                           |

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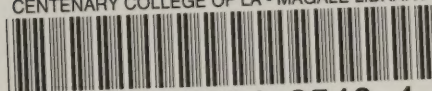
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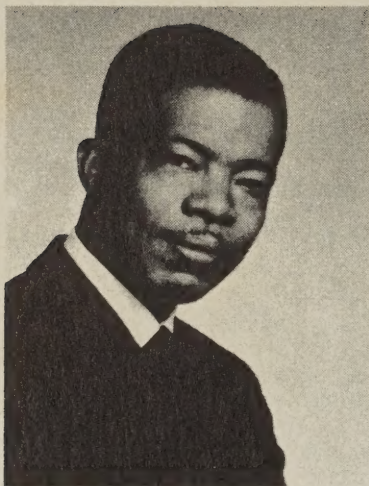




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